

VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI
**UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES**
FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

PHẠM THỊ THÙY LINH

**TEACHER'S HUMOR USE IN THE
CLASSROOM AND STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF ITS EFFECTIVENESS
AND APPROPRIATENESS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (TEFL)

Hanoi, May 2011

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SUPERVISOR: LƯƠNG QUỲNH TRANG (MA)

Hanoi, May 2011

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ABSTRACT

Humor has long been a naturally indispensable part of human life. It has existed and developed since the very first day of human history as Bill Kelly said “After God created the world, He made man and woman. Then, to keep the whole thing from collapsing, He invented humor.” Humor is also considered an effective tool in every aspect; a sense of humor is “part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done” (Dwight David Eisenhower, American 34th President). Education is certainly no exception. Research has shown a large number of benefits of humor as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. The class’s atmosphere is more pleasant; students are more relaxed and feel at ease to participate. Particularly, there are possibly positive outcomes in their learning. For any teachers, especially the tired ones, humor is a useful prescription helping them, to be more comfortable and passionate in teaching. Humor makes them more approachable to their students.

However, while the topic of humor has long been studied carefully in the West, it has just been paid attention to in Asia. Even in Vietnam, humor has not received adequate indication of interest. Not any empirical studies of humor have been found to the best of the researcher’s knowledge. Few studies seen could serve only as sources of humor techniques or materials for teachers as works of reference. They claimed the importance of humor in teaching, but there were no findings from real situations but a collection of affirmed literature review in the world.

For those reasons, this study entitled “Teacher’s humor use in the classroom and students’ perceptions of its effectiveness and appropriateness” hopes to fill the gap. The central aims of the present

research are to understand the use of humor of a teacher in the classroom and students' perceptions of its effectiveness and appropriateness. The researcher used a single-case study; participants are one teacher and his students in one class. Three main sources form the basis of data collection and analyses were: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The study found out the teacher's perception of the importance of humor and his ways and types to generate humor. His humor style was also revealed through Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin, 2003). More interestingly, his six ways (categorized by the researcher) to make students laugh were described in detail after a long time of careful observations. Students' perceptions of the teacher's humor effectiveness were rated by Likert Scales. Readers can understand more thoroughly the benefits and degrees of the teacher's humor as evaluated by the students. Appropriateness of humor was also examined, which is needed to form a comprehensive picture of humor use in the classroom. In all findings, there were comparisons between teacher's and students' views after all.

Briefly, this study brings readers a colorful and all-sided picture of humor use as a pedagogical tool in a language classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii-iii
List of figures, tables and abbreviations	x-xi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	
I. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study	1-3
II. Aims of the study and research questions	3
III. Methods of the study	4
IV. Scope of the study	4
V. Significance of the study	4-5
VI. Organization of the study	5
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	
I. Definition of key terms	
1. Humor	6-7
2. Humor use	7
II. Effectiveness of humor use in teaching	
II.1. Positive effects of humor on students	
II.1.1. Psychological benefits	9-10
II.1.2. Instructional/Communication benefits	10-12
II.1.3. Cognitive benefits	12

II.1.4. Disciplinary benefits	12-13
II. 2. Positive effects of humor on teachers	13
II. 3. Summary of educational benefits of humor use	13
III. Types and forms of humor	
III.1. Types of humor	13-15
III.2. Forms of humor	15-18
IV. Inappropriate and appropriate use of humor	
IV.1. Inappropriate use of humor	18-22
IV.2. Appropriate use of humor	22
V. Related humor studies	
V.1. In the West	22
V.2. In Asia	23
V.3. In Vietnam and at ULIS, VNU	23-24
VI. Research gaps	24
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	
I. Introduction	25-26
II. Sampling and Participants	26-27
III. Data collection instruments	
A. Mr. Bean	
1. Humor Style Questionnaire by Rod Martin	27-28
2. Interview with Mr. Bean	28-29
B. Students	

1. Self-designed questionnaire for E1K41 students.	29-30
2. Interviews with the students	31
C. Observations	31-32
IV. Data collection procedures	
A. The teacher	
1. Questionnaire	32
2. Interview	32
B. The students	
1. Questionnaire	
a. Questionnaire distribution	32
b. Questionnaire clarification	33
2. Interviews	
a. Participants in the interviews	33-34
b. Interviews' content	34
C. Observations	34-35
V. Data analysis procedures	
A. The teacher	35
B. The students	35
C. Observations	36
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	

<p>A. Participants</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Bean <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mr. Bean’s profile b. Personal information 2. Fast-track program 3. E1K41 students 	<p>37-38</p> <p>38-40</p> <p>40</p> <p>41</p>
<p>B. Findings</p> <p>I. Research question 1: <i>What are the ways the teacher used to generate humor in the classroom?</i></p> <p>I.1. Mr. Bean’s ways and types of generating humor revealed through the interviews with him and his students</p> <p>I.2. Mr. Bean’s humor style revealed through the questionnaire</p> <p>I.3. Mr. Bean’s ways of generating humor in the classroom</p> <p>Conclusion</p>	<p>42-43</p> <p>43-46</p> <p>46-48</p> <p>48-61</p> <p>62-63</p>
<p>II. Research question 2: <i>What are the students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the humor used by the teacher in the classroom?</i></p> <p>Conclusion</p>	<p>64-71</p> <p>72-73</p>

III. Research question 3 and research question 4	
III.1. Teacher’s perceptions of inappropriate humor in general	74
III.2. Students’ perception of inappropriate humor in general	74-76
III.3. Research question 3: <i>Is there any humor used by the teacher that the students view as inappropriate?</i>	77
III.4. Research question 4: <i>What humor used by the teacher do the students view as inappropriate?</i>	78
III.4.1. Related humor	
III.4.1.1. Vietnamese dialects	79
III.4.1.2. Informal personal pronoun	80
III.4.1.3. Gender	80
III.4.2. Unrelated humor	
III.4.2.1. Unrelated topics	81
III.4.2.2. Make fun of other teachers	81-83
III.4.2.3. Belittle himself	83-84
Conclusion	84-86
IV. Research question 5: <i>What suggestions does Mr. Bean have if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class?</i>	86
V. Research question 6: <i>What kind of humor that the students think teachers in general should avoid using in the classroom?</i>	87-88

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	
V.1. Summary	89-92
V.2. Implications for classroom teaching and teachers' self improvement	92-93
V.2.1. Implications for classroom teaching	
V.2.2. Implications for teachers' self-improvement	93-94
V.3. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research	
REFERENCES	95-103
APPENDICES	104-120

LIST OF TABLES, CHARTS, FIGURES AND ABBREVIATIONS

LIST OF TABLES		PAGES
Table 1	Several definitions of humor in a broad sense	7
Table 2	8 statements belonging to Affiliative humor style in HSQ	47
Table 3	Six ways to generate humor in classroom of Mr. Bean	48
Table 4	The second way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean	50
Table 5	Comparison between the teacher's and students' perceptions	73
Table 6	Not-appropriate humor uses by Mr. Bean	84
LIST OF CHARTS		
Chart 1	Effectiveness of Mr. Bean's humor perceived by the students	65
Chart 2	Effectiveness of Mr. Bean's humor perceived by the students	66
Chart 3	Inappropriate humor in general perceived by the students	75
Chart 4	Inappropriateness of Mr. Bean's humor perceived by the students	77
LIST OF FIGURES		
Figure 1	The third way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean	52

Figure 2	The fourth way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean	54
Figure 3	The fifth way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean	57
Figure 4	Reasons why students thought some humor uses were inappropriate	78
Figure 5	Should-avoid humor listed by the students	87

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FELTE: Faculty of English Language Teacher Education

ULIS: University of Languages and International Studies

VNU: Vietnam National University

BS: Broad sense (of humor definition)

NS: Narrow sense (of humor definition)

HSQ: Humor Style Questionnaire (by Rod Martin)

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter first describes statement of the problem and rationale for the study. Then, it discusses the purpose of the study and research questions. After that, this chapter introduces the methodology and scope of the study. Significance of the present research is followed. Finally, it outlines the organization of the research paper.

I. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

Humor is an inextricable part of human life and thus a fundamental aspect of humanity's unique capacity for language. In fact, it stands as one of the few universals applicable to all peoples and all languages throughout the world (Kruger, 1996; Trachtenberg, 1979). In teaching, a sense of humor is an important factor to make a successful teacher. When students are asked to describe exemplary teachers, one of the main characteristics they choose is a sense of humor. Students frequently recall that their favorite teachers made them laugh and more importantly made learning fun (Glasgow & Hicks, 2003). A study conducted based on the opinions of 3725 students concerning best-liked and least-liked teachers has shown that better than 40% responded favorably to teachers with a sense of humor (Hamachekak, 1969). It is no secret that teachers who engage students have found the use of humor as a positive way of putting students at ease, gaining attention, and showing students that the teacher is indeed human. Besides, to students, empirical studies have supported the claim that the use of humor in the classroom may produce positive outcomes in their learning (e.g., Peterson, 1980; Powell & Andresen, 1985; Felson, 1987; Ziv, 1988; Gentilhomme, 1992; Parrott, 1994; Deniere, 1995; Hillman, 1995; cited in Chen, 2007). Hence, humor is a beneficial tool in the classroom for both teachers and students.

In the West, studies of the use of humor as an adjunct to help students learn have a long history. More recent evidence indicates that humor has positive effects on students' feelings, attitudes towards teachers and the classroom, their motivation, attention and learning (Bryant, Crane, Cominsky & Zillman, 1980; Neuliep, 1991, Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). A number of studies have also been concerned about the ways of humor that teachers use in class and the students' perceptions of their effectiveness and appropriateness. On the contrary, the topic of humor in Asia has only been paid increasing attention recently. The majority of the studies are theoretical and until now, there have been hardly any empirical studies on this topic. Moreover, a big difference is shown in the perception of humor between the West and Asia, where humor is not considered the important characteristic of a successful teacher as well as other careers (Yue, 2006; Nevo & Nevo, 2001).

In Vietnam, it appears to have no difference from the Asian picture. Studies on humor in general are difficult to find and hardly can the researcher see any empirical research on this topic. It seems that in Vietnam, humor use in the classroom has not been considered a powerful tool for teaching and learning. In ULIS, VNU, until now, as found by the researcher, there have been only two studies on this topic and they have only synthesized the materials to form a useful guideline for teachers to use humor in the classroom effectively. How teachers are using humor and how students perceive it have not been mentioned. Although there are findings of those questions, they are in the Western context. It is necessary to have a look at them in Vietnamese context.

All of these factors encourage the researcher to conduct this study entitled **“Teacher’s humor use in the classroom and students’ perceptions of its effectiveness and appropriateness”**.

II. Aims of the study and research questions

The primary purpose of the present research is to explore the use of the teacher's humor in the classroom and students' perceptions of its effectiveness and appropriateness. This research also aims at giving suggestions made by the teacher and the students to any teacher who wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class.

Specifically, the research seeks for answers to the following questions:

Teacher:

1. What are the ways the teacher used to generate humor in the classroom?

Students:

2. What are the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the humor used by the teacher in the classroom?
3. Is there any humor used by the teacher that the students view as inappropriate?
4. If yes (question 3), what humor used by the teacher do the students view as inappropriate?

Suggestions

5. What suggestions does the teacher have if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class?
6. What kind of humor that the students think teachers in general should avoid using in the classroom?

III. Methods of the study

In this mixed method research (both qualitative and quantitative), single-case study method was applied. The researcher chose one teacher

and one class to study. Three main sources forming the basis of data collection and analyses were: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The data were processed and implications were made. Lastly, conclusions were drawn from the findings.

IV. Scope of the study

In this study, the researcher only focused on verbal humor instead of non-verbal or the materials that the teacher used (in terms of forms of humor). Regarding the participants, the researcher only chose one teacher and one class as a single case of the study.

V. Significance of the study

To the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first empirical research on the role of humor in teaching in Vietnam. Therefore, it will enrich the literature on this topic.

This study also seeks to examine minutely the way a teacher generated humor in class, which is certain an interesting and useful source of reference for any teacher who wants to insert laughters in the lessons.

Furthermore, the present research might also be the first study in Vietnam to identify what students consider appropriate and inappropriate humor. From then, humorous ingredients if added would be closer to and more effective for students, who are targeted audience of humor in the classroom. Teachers also have a chance to look back on their humor use to see if the humor lives up to their expectation, and they may have adaptation if needed.

VI. Organization of the study

The rest of the paper comprises five chapters as follows:

Chapter II: **Literature Review** lays the theoretical foundation for the study, including the definitions of key terms, as well as the concise review of related studies worldwide.

Chapter III: **Methodology** details the methods which have been adopted and the procedures which have been followed when the researcher conducted the study.

Chapter IV: **Results and Discussion** present and discuss the ways the teacher generated humor in the classroom, students' perceptions of its effectiveness and appropriateness, and the suggestions made by the teacher and the students on teachers' humor use in class.

Chapter V: **Conclusion** ends the study by summarizing the main points, discussing the implications, revealing the limitations, and providing some suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Divided into six parts, this chapter reviews the literature. The first part introduces the definition of key terms, including humor and humor use. The second part reviews the effectiveness of humor use in teaching, for both students and teachers. The next two parts discuss types, forms of humor and the inappropriate as well as appropriate humor use in the classroom. Finally, the research gaps are pointed out after related humor studies in the West, in Asia, in Vietnam and in ULIS, VNU are reviewed.

I. Definition of key terms

1. Humor

There have been a large number of definitions of humor by Western researchers. In fact, there are probably at least 500 definitions, concepts, notions, and interpretations of humor and laughter (Goodman, 1995). Ruch (1998) divides humor definitions into two categories. One is called humor in “a narrow sense”. Humor is one element of the comic and “denotes a smiling attitude towards life and its imperfection: an understanding of the incongruities of existence” (p.6). Humor by this definition is benevolent and related to only positive effects. Any sense of mockery or ridicule does not exist. Several definitions also follow this category. According to Henmen (2001), “humor refers to a playful frame of mind that gives individual a feeling of well-being, better thinking skills and a relief of pain feeling” (p.17). Hurren (2002) defines humor as any message, verbal or nonverbal, which evokes feelings of positive amusement by others.

Another category of humor is “a broad sense of humor”, which is not limited to positive meanings only. Over the last two decades, the English term “humor” has been commonly applied to any material or behavior that produces in observers some degree of laughing or smiling response (Bremmer & Roodenburg, 1997). Deiter (2002) defines humor

as “anything that is perceived to be funny, comical, and amusing”. In fact, many Western researchers have been more likely to define humor in a broad sense than in a narrow sense. The term “humor” generally has lost its narrow focus and has evolved to become a broad umbrella term for all laughter-related phenomena (Martin, 2003). Several Western definitions of humor listed in Table 1 (adapted from Chen, 2007) shows clearly the popularity of the broad sense of humor rather than the narrow sense.

Researchers	Definition
Cerciello (2000)	the quality of being amusing or comical.
Dritz (1983)	those attributes of an event that make us laugh.
McGhee (1979)	any event that is characterized by a sensitivity to or appreciation of ludicrous, absurd, incongruous, or comical events.
Sheppard (2002)	a quality that makes something seem funny or amusing.
Vogel (1995)	the sudden experience of amusement which is caused by incongruities from what is expected in language, behavior, or illustration.
Ziegler (1998)	communication including teasing, jokes, witticisms, satire, sarcasm, cartoons, puns, and clowning, which induces amusement, with or without laughing or smiling.

Table 1: Several definitions of humor in the broad sense

This study aims to investigate the perceived effects and appropriateness of humor use; therefore, the term “humor” should not be limited to a narrow sense. The second category, “a broad sense” of humor, will be adopted in this paper.

2. Humor use

Ware (1999) indicates that the overall humor construct “good sense of humor” consists of three components: “humor comprehension,” “humor appreciation/response,” and “humor production/generation.” Humor use is synonymous with “humor generation”, “humor production” or “humor creativity”, which refers to any behavior or ability in generating humor.

II. Effectiveness of humor use in teaching

According to Greene and Burleson (2003), studies of the use of humor as an addition to helping students learn have a long and complex history. Much of the research done a number of years ago found “either no relationship or an inverse relationship between humor and learning outcomes” (Gruner, 1970; Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977; Zillman & Bryant, 1983; cited in Green & Burleson, 2003, p. 894). Nevertheless, more recent research findings suggest that humor has a positive influence on students’ feelings about their teachers (Bryant, Crane, Cominsky, & Zillman, 1980, cited in Green & Burleson, 2003, p.894), attitudes toward their classroom experiences (Neuliep, 1991, cited in Green & Burleson, 2003, p.894), and motivation and learning (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999, cited in Green & Burleson, 2003, p.894). Theoretically, humor is considered as way of generating attention (Ziv, 1988, cited in Green & Burleson, 2003, p.894). The attention generated by humor may last long enough to assist students to learn what they would otherwise miss.

In this part of the study, the researcher will review the positive effects of humor on both students and teachers by categorizing them into four main areas, namely psychological, instructional, cognitive and disciplinary benefits. How humor benefits teaching and learning will be pointed out clearly.

II. 1. Positive effects of humor on students

II.1.1 Psychological benefits

Humor is one of the powerful tools to create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Widespread evidence on the psychological effects of humor supports that it can decrease anxiety and stress, improve self-esteem, and increase motivation and perceived quality of life (Berk et al., 1989b; Cornett, 1986; Cousins, 1989; Fry, 1992; Martin & Dobbin, 1988; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; cited in Berk, 1996). All those factors are believed to help students to learn better.

According to Dornyei (2001), language learning is one of the “most face-threatening school subjects” (p.40) because with a rather limited language code, students can easily make mistakes when they have to focus on too many factors of the language at the same time. Language anxiety has been found to be the main factor that prevents students from gaining achievement in learning (MacIntyre, 1999; Young, 1999; cited in Dornyei, 2001). Consequently, a no-tension atmosphere is needed. With the aid of humor, the classroom will have a relaxing atmosphere. Students are at ease; thus, they can be more confident to participate and raise their voice in class “without feeling humiliated or vulnerable” (Chiasson, 2002). It is also a means of enhancing student motivation to learn English. They are encouraged to “take risk” by making mistakes without fear of criticism in a joyful environment, which is particularly useful for L2 learners. They can practice using and communicating in English more freely without feeling anxious. Moreover, due to less stress and anxiety, students can increase comprehension and cognitive retention (Berk, 1998; Hill, 1998).

The psychological effects of humor are supported by several theories, of which theories of Freud are two outstanding ones. The Relief Theory advanced in the 20th century affirms that “laughter gives us some freedom from the numerous restrictions under which we live in a daily lives” (cited in Ching & Fiona, p. 12). School is considered one of the

most hallowed places (Dornyei, 2001); that is why when humor is added, the school will be less tense. This allows everyone to laugh for a moment without thinking too seriously of the topic. Then, they can begin to approach the issue again and perhaps with a new perspective. Psychoanalytic theory of Freud also says that when people experience negative emotions, humor provides them with “altered perspective on the situation” and avoids those negative feelings (Ching & Fiona, 2007, p. 13). Humor acts as a defense mechanism for people to overcome unpleasant emotions. Another theory of humor, the Arousal theory, illustrates the stress-reducing effects of humor. This theory explains the function of humor as reducing tension and anxiety (Ching & Fiona, 2007).

Briefly, humor improves the classroom atmospheres and makes it more comfortable for students to take part in the learning environment. Because anxiety and stress decrease, and motivation and self-esteem increase, students can learn better.

II.1.2. Instructional/Communication benefits

Among the instructional reasons for using humor in the classroom, there are two that bubble to the surface. First, it builds the professor-student connection, and second, it instantaneously engages students in the learning process. Lowman (1995) insists these are the two most important ingredients in college teaching.

Humor is believed to break down the barriers between students and teachers (Hill, 1998; Berk, 1998). Due to the barriers, students find it more difficult to raise ideas, ask questions and give comments, which is exactly the barrier to their learning. With humor, the rapport between students and teachers develops dramatically. Studies by Askildson (2005) and Chen (2007) indicate that teachers that use humor in the classroom

become closer and approachable. Students who perceive their teachers to be humorous tend to be more willing to talk (Menzel & Carrel, 1999) and demonstrate more positive motivation (Christophel & Gorham, 1995). This connection is essential for student learning, satisfaction, and retention (Astin, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Teachers are less like imposing authority figures, which encourages students to shift from passive information receivers to active and inquiring learners. In fact, one of the major reasons for the high student dropout rate in many distance-education programs is the lack of that connection (Berk, 2002).

Humor is one of the reasons that make students want to go to class. There is a strong correlation between student attendance and the use of humor (Berk, 1998). Students tend to go to class with fun environment and skip the boring one. Moreover, in class, humor can attract students and help them focus on the lesson. As Berk (2002) says, it is impossible to know what is in students' mind when they sit down. Humor will be one of the effective tools to draw their attention and students are more likely to be fully engaged in learning activities, which is a key factor in learning (Eble, 1994; McKeachie, 1994). Berk considers humor "a hook" to students. As summarized by Lundberg and Miller Thurston (2002, cited in Whimsy, 2008, p. 4), "humor relieves monotony and boredom and helps students stay tuned in, keeping their attention so that they can learn. If they know something funny might happen at any moment, they listen."

II.1.3. Cognitive benefits

Many studies show that humor has cognitive benefits on students. In this paper, the researcher only reviews studies that focus on external factors which contribute to cognitive benefits rather than the physiological or internal factors related to brain functions. First of all, students tend to remember the lesson better when it is taught with humor

(Hill, 1988; Glenn, 2002). John Cleese (a famous English comedian, writer and film producer) also affirms that “who laughs most, learns best”. It is simple to understand that students can retain the subject delivered in special or humorous way. Moreover, all the benefits presented before (psychological and instructional benefits) are proved effective factors to help student cognition.

II.1.4. Disciplinary benefits

When teachers have to deal with undesirable behaviors, humor is one of preventative techniques (Ackerman & Dummer, 1982). Because humor reduces tension, the relationship between students and teachers is less strained and behavioral management is easier to achieve. If the teachers are too serious, that relation becomes tense. Students can be more stubborn and their behaviors may become uncontrollable. Moreover, there are usually rules in the classroom, and students tend to be more willing to accept them when rules are created in a pleasant atmosphere, with non- threatening or non-confrontational styles. Proctor (1994; cited in Steele, 1998) states that when rules are delivered in a humorous style, students easily accept them. Behavioral problems are reported to reduce dramatically (Sullivan, 1992; cited in Steele, 1998). Humor now is an alternative to authoritarian discipline (Goor, 1989; cited in Steele, 1998).

II. 2. Positive effects of humor on teachers

Not only does humor bring benefits to students but it also has positive effects on teachers. The supportive and pleasant atmosphere created will help teachers less tired in the classroom. Besides, preparing as well as presenting a lesson in a humorous style, teachers are more likely to find teaching fun and enjoyable. This job is no longer boring and

monotonous. Particularly, the good learning results of students are absolutely encouraging and rewarding to teachers. Nothing can be more valuable for the teacher than his/her students focusing on and enjoying his/her lesson (Berk, 1998).

II. 3. Summary

In this part of the paper, the researcher has presented four benefits of humor, which are psychological, instructional, cognitive, and disciplinary benefits. All these positive effects are strongly related and directly lead to students' better learning. Such factors as physiological benefits which are considered indirectly connected with student learning are not discussed in this part. In addition, the benefits that humor provides teachers with are also shown in this part.

III. Types and forms of humor

III. 1. Types of humor

There are many ways to categorize humor types. However, the researcher will review the most general division by Martin (2003) (cited in Ching & Fiona, 2007). According to him, there are four types of humor which emerge by crossing two distinctions, benevolent humor and potentially detrimental humor.

The first type is *affiliative humor*. According to Ruch (2002), "affiliative humor is benign communal humor such as telling jokes, engaging in witty repartee, or otherwise amusing others as a means of promoting social cohesion, morale, and attraction, and reducing conflicts and tension" (p. 3). Those people that use this type of humor tend to amuse others to build or facilitate relationship and, particularly, reduce tension of the atmosphere. This type aims at positive moods and emotions as well as relaxing attitudes and harmonious relationship.

The second type is *self-enhancing humor*. This type is seen as a defense mechanism, as discussed in Freud's theory. When people encounter unpleasant emotions such as sadness, anger or stress, humor provides them with an alternative perspective on the issue and they can overcome such emotions. According to Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray and Weir (2003), in comparison with *affiliative humor*, this use of humor is introvert rather than extrovert as it does not focus on interpersonal results; it is "positively related to openness to experience, self-esteem, and psychological well-being" (p.54) when deal with undesirable feelings.

Aggressive humor is the third type. According to Ruch (2002), aggressive humor "refers to humor used to enhance the self at the expense of one's relationships, as seen, for example, in ridicule, sarcasm, mockery, or manipulative or coercive uses of humor." While Zillman (1983), on the same direction, believes that this style is related to "the use of sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, 'put-down', or disparagement humor" (cited in Ching & Fiona, 2007, p.23). This type of humor is also known as "put-down humor". Aggressive humor, such as telling people an embarrassing story about another one, is a way to deploy aggression and make others look bad so he/she looks good.

The last type is *self-defeating humor*. Ruch (2002) defines this type of humor as "humor used to enhance relationships with others at the expense or detriment of oneself, such as excessively self-disparaging humor, or humor as avoidance or denial" (cited in Ching&Fiona, 2007, p. 24). People try to amuse others by disparaging themselves or laugh along when being ridiculed in order to gain approval. This is also the way to hide their negative feelings or avoid dealing constructively with problems (Kubie, 1971; cited in Ching & Fiona, 2007). Fabrizi & Pollio (1987;

cited in Ching & Fiona, 2007) point out that to those people, there is an element of emotional neediness, avoidance, and low self-esteem underlying their use of humor.

In brief, the four different humor styles suggested by Martin (2003), namely, *affiliative humor*, *self-enhancing humor*, *aggressive humor*, and *self-defeating humor*, do have their own distinct characteristics. While affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor are found to be related positively to agreeableness, openness, and self-esteem, aggressive humor is related negatively to agreeableness and conscientiousness. Besides, self-defeating humor is related negatively to self-esteem or constructs such as emotional stability.

III.2. Forms of humor

Basically, we have two forms of humor in teaching, of which one relies on delivery and the other is inserted in print materials. In this study, only the first form: humor through delivery is discussed.

Chen (2007) mentions in his interview questions four kinds of humor through delivery, which are spontaneous humor, planned humor, content-related humor and content-unrelated humor.

Spontaneous humor

In spontaneous humor, teachers do not plan to create humor but respond to the immediate situation in the classroom.

Response to students' questions is the most frequently used type of humor in college classrooms (Bryant et al., 1980a). Ad-lib responses to questions can promote an informal, relaxing, and nonthreatening classroom environment that is conducive to learning (as long as the comments are not put-downs or offensive. This is considered inappropriate use of humor, which will be discussed in detail later)

The second type of response is response to teachers' mistakes. According to Berk (2002), people joke more easily at the expense of others rather than themselves. However, in the classroom, self-defeating humor is "acceptable and desirable" (the last type of humor presented previously). It is also called "the safest way" of humor as the target is the teacher. "Self-downs" can serve as a face-saving maneuver to reduce a teacher's feeling of embarrassment and release the tension the students feel. It will "puncture professorial pomposity", thus breaking down the barriers between teachers and students. Research results indicate that the teacher who used self-disparaging humor is perceived as more effective at relieving tension and encouraging member participation, and appears more willing to share opinions. Hence, it is possible to think about self-defeating rather than putting students down.

The third response is to interruptions. Humor can be employed in response to outside interruptions, distractions, and physical and equipment breakdowns. A timely, spontaneous response that is humorous is the best way to put students at ease and regain their attention (Berk, 2002).

Planned humor

Contrary to spontaneous humor is planned humor. Spontaneous humor appears unintentionally in class; meanwhile, planned humor means teachers have to prepare it at home. When spontaneous humor requires teachers to be flexible and creative and even have "natural gift" to find humor in small details in the classroom, planned humor does not. Planned humor is for those who are "not spontaneously witty" (Partin, 2009, p.171). Partin also suggests that teachers can plan humor by looking for what they find amusing such as anecdotes, quotations and

share with students. With plan, any teacher can use humor in the classroom.

Content-related humor and content-unrelated humor

A number of researchers are in favor of using content-related humor rather than the unrelated one. The fitting humor can support learning as students not only can reduce stress or anxiety, but remember the subject better as well. They are more likely to connect the humor with the knowledge taught by teachers. Meanwhile, the unrelated humor can only diffuse the anxiety from students. It is also said to lead to students' distraction from the subject matter or even students' diminishing respect for the material and instructor (Shibley, 2005). Other studies also agree that unrelated humor can cause distraction from the lesson and learning environment. It may become harder for teachers to control the class or let students be on-track again as they forget they are in class as well as where they are in the lesson. At that time, the aim of the lesson is not achieved. Shibley (2005) says that the main task of teachers is teaching not entertaining; therefore, teachers should use humor when it is needed.

In another way, Shade (1996) divides humor into four forms: *figural*, *verbal*, *visual* and *auditory*. Figural humor includes cartoon, comic strips, and caricatures. Verbal humor refers to jokes, puns, riddles, satire, anecdotes, comic simile, comic metaphor, hyperbole, irony, parody, yarns, tall tales, tongue twisters/ spoonerism and wit. These forms involve the use of language. Visual humor depends on visual cues while auditory humor is dependent on auditory cues for the humor to be effective.

ULIS is a higher education institution; the figural humor is not popular. Similarly, visual as well as auditory humors are not seen widely in university. Therefore, only verbal humor will be studied in detail.

IV. Inappropriate and appropriate use of humor

IV.1. Inappropriate use of humor

Offensive humor is considered inappropriate use of humor in classroom (Daly & Vangelisti, 2003). However, first of all, it is necessary to understand what “offensive humor” is. “*Any word, object, or action that violates a person’s values, moral principles, or norms of behavior would be offensive*” (Veatch, 1998; cited in Berk, 2002, p. 12). Berk (2002) divides offensive humor into seven kinds:

1. Put-downs
2. Sarcasm
3. Ridicule
4. Sexual content and innuendo
5. Profanity
6. Vulgarity
7. Sensitive personal experiences

Any teacher misbehavior will evoke negative feelings on the part of learners. This negative effect, in turn, presumably leads to adverse result in learning. Teacher negativity has deleterious effects on self-perceived learning (Kearney et al., 1991). According to Berk (2002), offensive humor leads to a number of negative effects. They are: *tightening up, withdrawal, resentment, anger, tension, anxiety, turning off/tuning out.*

In the context of this study, which is Vietnam and ULIS, a pedagogical environment, there are kinds of humor that are not common or rarely seen in the classroom, as observed by the researcher. Hardly can the researcher meet humor or any actions related to sexual content, profanity or vulgarity in the university. In case other students as participants in this study experience any kind of them, they will be studied carefully later. In this part, only the first three kinds: put-down, sarcasm, and ridicule humor are discussed briefly in order to provide more through understanding of these negative effects.

Put-down humor is the most common type. Berk (2002) says that it is “inescapable” and happens to everybody. This type of humor is also known as defeating (presented previously – the third type of humor), or disparagement humor. In this type, a target individual or group is victimized, belittled, or insulted. Let’s imagine there is a student asking his teacher a question which clearly reveals that he did not pay attention to the lecture, and what the teacher does is put him down. This surely guarantees the student’s embarrassment and humiliation. That student perhaps rarely asks another question and the classroom dare not to raise their voice.

To be specific, Berk (2002) points out some “targets should be avoided”:

- Colleagues or other co-workers
- Popular, entertainment, or political personalities
- Groups based on race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, religion, or sexual orientation
- People with certain physical characteristics (e.g., fat, thin, short, tall, blonde, pregnant, bald, or all of the preceding)
- People with physical disabilities or handicaps
- People with mental handicaps or illnesses

Sarcasm

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7th ed, p.1295), sarcasm is “the use of words to express something opposite of the literal meaning of a sentence”; particularly, it is “bitter, caustic and other ironic language that is usually directed against an individual” (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary). It is necessary to distinguish between irony and sarcasm. Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) argue that sarcasm and irony are similar in that both are forms of reminder, but they are different in that sarcasm conveys ridicule of a specific victim whereas irony does not. “Sarcasm is an overtly aggressive type of irony with clearer markers and clearer target” (Attardo, 2001, p.137). Therefore, it can be seen that sarcasm has identified victims while irony does not.

Nelms (2001) finds positive effects of sarcasm used by professors in the classroom. For example, it can help build rapport, make a point, spark interest, and push students. Also, she argues that even when the sarcasm serves a negative function, students who are not the chosen targets find it extremely entertaining. Berk (2002) strongly disapproves of using sarcasm in the classroom as “it is usually cutting, caustic, biting, derisive, sneering, harsh, sardonic, or bitter” (p. 17). He frankly says “No” to any kind of sarcasm even the intention is positive. The reason that Berk thinks sarcasm is dangerous is its spontaneity. “It’s highly risky because it’s difficult to control the positivity or negativity of the comment when it comes out of our mouths so quickly” (p. 17). If the result is negative and directed at an individual student, the consequences can be so hurtful and damaging that a student may not recover from the wound.

Ridicule

Ridicule is one type of disparagement humor, the humor which is directed at an individual concerning some aspect of his or her behavior or appearance (Janes and Olson, 2008). Compared to other disparagement humor, ridicule is more personal and does not typically focus on group membership as the basis of the humor (Wilson, 1979). Janes & Olson (2008) argue that it would bring the embarrassment and conformity to the targeted students and destroy their originality. Besides, their research results show that observation of ridicule increase conformity and increase fear of failure. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no benefit when using ridicule in the classroom for both the victims and the observers. As Mark Twain (1893) said “there is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, howsoever poor and witless”.

Briefly, the inappropriate kind of humor reviewed in this part is called “offensive humor”. Moreover, it can be concluded that put-down, sarcasm, and ridicule humor are types of disparagement humor or aggressive humor (the third type of humor presented previously), which derogates or provides negative information about someone or something. This type of humor causes negative effects on both the intended targets and the class in general. Therefore, teachers are highly recommended to avoid using this humor in the classroom.

IV.2. Appropriate use of humor

From this, we can say that appropriate humor is non-offensive humor, and it is best when it can serve the effectiveness discussed in the previous part.

V. Related humor studies

V.1. In the West

As found by the researcher, in the West, humor in the classroom is a topic that has been paid much attention to. The studies strongly related will be reviewed. Firstly, in a study carried out in 2000 named “Teachers’ report of how they used humor with students perceived use of such humor”, White explores how professors’ and students’ perceptions of the effective use of humor in the classroom differ. The results show that the two groups agree that humor can relieve stress, gain attention, and create a healthy learning environment. However, there is a difference concerning the use of humor to handle unpleasant situations, in which the students support it while the teachers do not. White also provides recommendations for humor use in the classroom. Another related study is “Appropriate and Inappropriate Uses of Humor by Teachers” by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006). Participants in this study were asked to generate examples of appropriate and inappropriate uses of humor by teachers. Responses were unitized and content analyzed, resulting in the identification of four appropriate humor categories and four inappropriate humor categories. Each category is defined, and the implications of using different types of humor in the classroom are discussed. Besides, the various types of humor used by teachers and their effectiveness have also been investigated.

V.2. In Asia

In Asia, humor is not appreciated and paid attention to as much as in the West. Only recently has research on this topic emerged and increased progressively in some countries in Asia such as China, Taiwan, and Japan. Nevertheless, there is a huge difference in the perceptions of humor in the classroom between the West and Asia. According to a recent research conducted by Yue, Hao, Lan and Yan (2006), humor is ranked

among the *least* important factors in the ideal Chinese personality among the undergraduate students.

The first empirical research on the role of humor in teaching in mainland China, and indeed, one of the first in any non-Western context is “University Teachers’ Humor Production in the Classroom and Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness” by Chen (2007). The primary aim of the research is to investigate the relationship between university teachers’ humor production in the classroom and student ratings of teaching effectiveness in a Chinese context. The study specifies the complex interrelationships among teachers’ demographics: gender, age, and teaching subject; teachers’ personal characteristics: humor styles, thinking styles in teaching, and personality traits; humor production in the classroom; and student ratings. Other studies are theoretical humor studies.

V.3. In Vietnam and at ULIS, VNU

In Vietnam, the situation is not much brighter when rarely can the researcher find any empirical research related to humor in classroom. At ULIS, VNU, there are two studies conducted by students. One is “Humor in Teaching English for Vietnamese students” by Nguyen Hanh Dung (2003) and “Using Humor to Teach English Grammar at High School” by Dang Thi Huong (2003). They are the very first pieces of research related to humor in ULIS; thus, they are highly appreciated. However, both two papers are totally theoretical. They are considered the sources of information about humor and serve as guidelines for teachers using humor in the classroom. The ways that teachers use humor, students’ perceived effects, whether they see the humor appropriate or inappropriate are not mentioned.

VI. Research gaps

The research gaps can be indentified through the above literature review. There are strongly related studies of humor, but they have been carried out in the West, not in Asia or Vietnam. It is important to see if previous Western findings are different in Vietnamese context.

Secondly, the literature shows that there may be significant differences between Asians' and Westerners' perceptions of humor in the classroom. Since no study has been conducted to confirm this assumption, an investigation with interviews is needed to see if this assertion holds true. The present research will interview Vietnamese teachers and students to see their viewpoints on humor.

Finally, in Vietnam as well as ULIS, there is no empirical research on humor where the ways to use humor are generated by teachers themselves and students have had a voice to give comments on them. This study will hopefully bridge that gap.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

I. Introduction

Case study is a type of research design and analysis which Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) consider the “most widely used approach to qualitative research in education” (p. 433). There are many definitions of case study in each field such as psychology, political science, medicine. Most definitions of case study highlight the “bounded,” singular nature of the case, the importance of context, the availability of multiple sources of information or perspectives on observations, and the in-depth nature of analysis. Gall et al. (2003) describe case study research as “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 436).

In this study, single-case study was applied with a perfect whole of a classroom: a teacher and his students. The researcher wants to concentrate on the behaviors and perspectives of one humorous teacher in the classroom, and then, draws a thick description of his view and ways to generate humor in class. The students had chance to raise their voices about the appropriateness of the humor, which are also considered the triangulated perspectives compared with the teacher’s. Detailed case histories, including teaching experience, personality, may be much more feasible for one person than for a large number of individuals. Together with several tools, this study is likely to enable readers to know the case well and have a comprehensive view of the discussed matter.

Besides, the topic “humor” itself varies from person to person and any individual is unique. In this paper, the researcher firmly believes that the case appears to be atypical but theoretically interesting enough to be fruitfully studied (will be discussed in detail in the later part).

Hence, this study used case study because of its clear and primary advantages, which are the richness of description and detailed contextualization of one unique case. The researcher is fully aware of the first and most pronounced disadvantage of case study which is related to generalizability; however, “a single case or nonrandom sample is selected precisely *because* the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (Merriam, 1998, p.208).

II. Sampling and participants

Case selection and sampling are among the most crucial considerations in case study research. In this study, a single case was chosen according to some strategies by Patton (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1994). The teacher was considered first and foremost as this study focuses on how humor was made in the classroom.

a, A particular criterion: the teacher should be humorous as this study focuses on the ways teacher generates humor in classroom.

b, Reputational case selection: Whether the teacher is humorous or not is based on the perspectives of the researcher and other students, who are also participants of this research. The attitude of the researcher in this sampling process is very important as she herself needs to be “laughable” to classify and study the humor, together with the opinion of other students in the class.

c, Opportunistic sampling: The researcher decided to choose a familiar case because it is easier to access the participants and get their consent. In addition, it is possible to observe or interact with familiar participants or sites for a more extended or intensive period; as a result,

the researcher can obtain more useful data about the case. Finally, there is a greater understanding of the context based on prior knowledge.

Based on the three mentioned strategies, the researcher had chosen a perfectly suitable and interesting case. For four years attending ULIS, VNU, the chosen teacher is the most humorous teacher the researcher and her classmates have ever seen. He is also in charge of teaching the researcher's class. Because of those reasons, Mr. Bean (the name is pseudonym) was selected in this study.

Regarding the students as the participants of this paper, the researcher chose to study the view of E1K41 students, including 27 female students. The researcher, therefore, had chance to observe all the lessons of Mr. Bean with the class to note down and record Mr. Bean's behaviors and the class's responses. It was also much easier for her to conduct interviews with and administer questionnaires to E1K41. Understanding thoroughly the importance of the questionnaire, the class members would answer it in detail, sincerely and carefully.

III. Data collection instruments

Three main tools were used in this study: questionnaires, interviews and observations for both the teacher and students. Types of data gained by those methods are qualitative and quantitative data as the findings arrive by means of statistical procedures as well as in forms of words.

A. Mr. Bean

1. Humor Styles Questionnaire by Rod Martin

The researcher contacted Mr. Rod Martin (the author of Humor Styles Questionnaire – HSQ, and *The Psychology of Humor*, etc...) to ask

for the file HSQ as well as the permission to use it on October 13th, 2010. Mr. Rod Martin kindly agreed to help.

In the questionnaire, there were 32 statements describing different ways in which humor might be experienced. The respondent had to circle the number from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 7 (Totally Agree) to indicate the degree to which he agreed or disagreed with each statement. In the questionnaire, there was also the way to score the results and interpretation. Four styles of humor, according to Mr. Rod Martin, are:

Affiliative Humor: tendency to share humor with others, tell jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh, enjoy laughing along with others.

Self-Enhancing Humor: tendency to maintain a humorous outlook on life even when not with others, use humor in coping with stress, and cheer oneself up with humor.

Aggressive Humor: tendency to use humor to disparage, put down, or manipulate others; use of ridicule, offensive humor; compulsive expression of humor even when inappropriate.

Self-Defeating Humor: tendency to amuse others at one's own expense, self-disparaging humor; laughing along with others when being ridiculed or put down; using humor to hide one's true feelings from self and others.

(HSQ, p. 3)

2. Interview with Mr. Bean

This research aimed to find out the way humor was made and the view of students on the humor used in the classroom; therefore, it was necessary to understand the perspectives or purposes of the “author”, Mr. Bean, lying under the humor. Then, there was a comparison between what the teacher assumed with what he achieved through the eyes of the students, who directly “enjoyed” the humor. It would be very one-sided if there was no voice from Mr. Bean to say about his own humor or any theory/story behind it.

The interview, thus, was conducted to explore:

- a. The interviewee's perceptions of the importance of humor in the classroom (to students and teachers in general)
- b. The interviewee's perceptions of the achieved benefits of humor that he used for his students and himself in the classroom
- c. The interviewee's views on appropriate and inappropriate humor
- d. The interviewee's preference for using certain types of humor in the classroom

The researcher prepared a list of questions to ask the interviewee. However, the interview did not strictly follow the predetermined questions. The interviewer could be flexible based on the objectives and the responses of Mr. Bean. The researcher could dig deep on the unclear answers or any problem/issue arising from the teacher.

The interview was informal in a pleasant atmosphere and mostly in Vietnamese, not English.

B. Students

1. Self-designed questionnaire for E1K41 students.

There were two parts in the questionnaire for the students: Part I: "*Students' perception of the effectiveness of humor use in classroom*", and Part II: "*Appropriate and inappropriate humor in classroom.*"

In part I, the first question (the participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of humor **used by Mr. Bean** in the classroom) used the Likert Scale, the way "in which degrees of response, intensity of response, and the move away from dichotomous questions has been managed can be seen in the notion of *rating scales*—Likert scales" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005, p. 253). It also provided the

researcher with valuable personal attitudes of the participants (Nunan, 1998). Likert Scale is considered a very useful device as it builds in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response whilst still generating numbers.

The second question was also put under Likert Scale, which was about the general importance, the frequency of humor use in education as well as the type of humor that teachers may avoid using in the classroom. Besides, there was an open-ended question, which asked the students the type of humor that they thought should be avoided in the classroom since the options in Likert Scale were not enough and not representative for each school culture. This device is used to “invite an honest, personal comment from the respondents in addition to ticking numbers and boxes” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005, p.255). Further, it puts the responsibility for and ownership of the data much more firmly into the respondents’ hands.

In part II, the students were asked to list the examples of humor that Mr. Bean used in classroom in the form of open-ended questions. An open-ended question can “catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candor which, [...], are the hallmarks of qualitative data” (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2005, p. 255). Those questions truly need the response from the students instead of choosing from given options. The researcher wanted vivid and real data written by E1K41 members, who had learnt with Mr. Bean for more than 15 weeks. Moreover, the second question asked them if there was any humor that they thought is inappropriate. It also required the students to identify what it was and why they thought it was inappropriate. Detailed description of the humor and explanation were required after each option *Yes/No* for the second question. The last question in part II is “*Can you describe Mr.*

Bean in one sentence?” would help the researcher understand better about the class’s feelings towards their teacher.

2. Interview with the students

Six students were invited to take part in six individual interviews.

The interviewed aim to identify:

- a. The interviewees’ perceptions of the benefits of humor that Mr. Bean used in the classroom.
- b. The interviewees’ realization/notice of Mr. Bean’s preference of using humor in the classroom
- c. The interviewees’ views on appropriate and inappropriate humor of Mr. Bean (if any)

Similar to the interview with Mr. Bean, the researcher interviewed the students informally and flexibly although she prepared a list of predetermined questions suitable for the objectives. The interviews were also mostly in Vietnamese, not English.

All interviewees were asked the same basic questions, thus increasing comparability of responses. Data were complete for each person on the topics addressed in the interview. Nevertheless, the interviews still had flexibility to particular individuals and circumstances. The questions were considered to be natural and relevant.

C. Observations

Observational data helps the researcher gather “live” data from “live” situations. The researcher had the opportunity to look at “what is taking place *in situ* rather than at second hand” (Patton, 1990, p.203). This enabled the researcher to discover things that the participants might not freely talk about in interview situations, to move beyond perception-based data (e.g. opinions in interviews), and to be actually “in” the humor atmosphere.

The observations were semi-structured when the researcher only aimed at the ways to generate humor of the teacher as well as the

responses from the students. The researcher was the “complete participant” as she is one of the members in E1K41.

IV. Data collection procedures

A. The Teacher

The researcher invited Mr. Bean to take part in her study on November 11th, 2010 and he agreed.

1. Questionnaire

The researcher gave the questionnaire to Mr. Bean on January 10th, 2011. He had one week to complete it and returned it on January 17th, 2011.

2. Interview

The teacher was contacted via email to make an arrangement. The tape-recorded interview was conducted on January 10th, 2011 and lasted about 30 minutes. The planned objectives of the interview were achieved by the prepared list of questions and the researcher asked for some more answers related to the topics planned in the objectives.

B. The students

1. Questionnaire

a. Questionnaire distribution

The questionnaires were distributed to 24/27 members of E1K41 (who *were attending* Mr. Bean’s class at that time) on January 4th, 2011 and all of the 24 papers were collected on January 14th, 2011.

b. Questionnaire clarification

As in the questionnaire, there was question which asked the students if there was any inappropriate humor, it is necessary to check again their answer and require the explanations. The researcher confirmed the answer with 7 students to clarify the unclear responses in their questionnaire and to know more about their ideas.

2. Interviews

a. Participants in the interviews

After the questionnaires were returned, the researcher looked at them carefully and classified them into three groups. The students chosen to be interviewed were the representative of the three groups: positive, negative and neutral to Mr. Bean’s humor. Representatives of these

groups were then invited to participate in the interviews. They are: Liv, Emma, Becky and Lyn (all the names are pseudonyms). To be their classmate for 4 years and through observations, the researcher basically felt the way they respond towards the humor generated by Mr. Bean and more importantly, their characteristics.

Emma and Liv are opposite to each other. When Liv can easily and excitedly laugh at almost any joke, Emma does not. Even in some cases, Emma thinks they are not appropriate, which showed very clearly through her facial expressions and her whisper. The researcher firmly believed that interviewing two contrasting cases would be interesting and bring something new to the study.

Becky and Lyn have both heart and mind. Especially, to Becky, everything should be and could be explained if we spend time thinking. Lyn, despite enjoying Mr. Bean's humor, sometimes, shared with the researcher about the inappropriateness in it. Thus, interviewing Lyn and Becky would help the researcher have a comprehensive view of the discussed matter.

Besides them, two more students Beth and Tracy (names are pseudonyms) were interviewed because their questionnaire results showed very rich information that truly needed to be clarified since the questionnaire papers were too limited for them to express. The researcher could see clearly their enthusiasm on the topic through what they wrote. Again, Beth is a little negative towards Mr. Bean's humor, though not as much as Emma. Tracy is mostly interested in Mr. Bean jokes although she is sharp enough to realize the inappropriateness.

The interviews with six students were conducted on five days, January 11th, 12th, 17th, 18th, and 20th. Each conversation was tape-recorded and lasted around 15 to 30 minutes.

b. Interview content

A list of questions was also prepared in advance to achieve the objectives above. After answering those questions, the participants were asked to clarify so that the researcher could understand fully what they wrote in the questionnaire. This part was very important as they were typical for the whole class and the information asked was essential to be discussed in person. Also, it was not easy to understand the information through words only. Therefore, the second part varied from person to person.

All of the interviews (with the teacher and students) were transcribed and kept in Vietnamese (see Appendix III for the interview question).

C. Observations

After having the permission of Mr. Bean, the researcher recorded 8 of his lessons in semester I apart from attending all of his lessons. The researcher listened to them at home and noted down the ways Mr. Bean generated humor in the classroom and the responses of the students.

V. Data analysis procedures

A. The teacher

First of all, the style of using humor of Mr. Bean was interpreted based on HSQ, which would make the researcher understand more thoroughly about the ways or his preference for using certain type of humor in the classroom.

The data collected in the interview also helped to provide a more comprehensive view about how humor was made by the teacher. The effectiveness of humor and his views on the appropriateness of humor perceived by Mr. Bean were also compared with the perceptions of the students to see if his humor was successful and beneficial in the eyes of the students.

B. The students

The results from the questionnaires distributed to 24 students were demonstrated statistically in charts and tables. Their examples of humor that Mr. Bean used in the classroom were added together with results

from observation to find out the ways he used to make “students laugh” in the classroom. Finally, explanations and descriptions from any paper saying that there was inappropriate humor were used to better understand students’ views.

Through the interviews, the researcher had a deeper look on the perspectives of several students, their thought towards Mr. Bean’s humor. All of the data were used as the additional information to the numbers provided by charts, tables or mere words in the questionnaire.

C. Observations

Observation was the main tool to answer the question: How humor was made in the classroom? It was also the way to see clearly the responses of the class towards humor. Basic categories were generated through observations together with results from questionnaire and content analysis of the interviews.

Briefly, there are three main tools applied in this study: questionnaires, interviews, and observations. They are hoped to bring a complete picture about the humor use of the teacher in the classroom and his students’ perspectives on it.

Finally, the teacher received the manuscript of the study. This is hoped to “ensure authenticity or credibility of interpretations” (Duff, 2008, p. 171).

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Participants

The information about participants was obtained by the interviews and observations. Besides, it was directly related to the findings. Therefore, the participants' information is put in this chapter.

1. Mr. Bean

a. Mr. Bean's profile

Mr. Bean now is in his late thirties. He comes from the suburb of Hanoi. Having taught for 16 years, he spent the first four years (from 1994-1998) to teach Phonetics and Grammar. Since then, he has taught Pragmatics and Semantics in FELTE, ULIS, VNU.

Here are some interesting quotes about Mr. Bean from his students in E1K41:

“He’s quite like a nice rom-com movie in which there are jokes of some kinds: some bring laughter, some don’t; and there are good messages toward the audience as well.”

“He is a great teacher who knows the importance of simplicity and a person with an interesting view on life, but not someone I’m likely to become, though 😊”

“An enthusiastic, interesting, funny, motivating, friendly and good teacher 😊 One of my favorite inspirational teachers at university”

“A very unique teacher that shares great empathy with his students”

“He is practically humorous because he knows where to emphasize by adding laughter there.”

“He is such a weird teacher :D”

“You can never guess what he’s thinking about

(If he were a woman, he would be a “đanh đá” and mysterious one 😊)”

b. Personal information

To have a thicker description and more meaningful analysis of the case study, besides Mr. Bean’s profile and some quotes about him from students in E1K41, who directly “enjoy” his humor, the researcher would like to provide below some additional but outstanding information about Mr. Bean from her own observations and through conversations with other students and teachers.

Mr. Bean does not mind telling his personal and daily stories to the students; he talks about them very freely and friendly without being afraid of anything. He always keeps himself up-to-date with social information, both related and unrelated to his career. He spends a few minutes in break time or at the beginning of the lessons to share sympathetically with his students about the news, what he saw as urgent matters in everyday life of society. All things he discusses from simple to complicated seem light, even easy but very deep and profound after all. “Life-lessons” from him are never clear or try to teach anybody, but any student can realize them in the end. As one of his students said, *“he’s quite like a nice rom-com movie in which there are jokes of some kinds: some bring laughter, some don’t; and there are good messages toward the audience as well.”*

Mr. Bean always goes to teach on time. He usually comes to school from 5 to 10 minutes before class time. Mr. Bean highly appreciates and strongly requires students to respect teachers. Mr. Bean shared with the researcher that he just overheard some students in one class have

inappropriate language towards their teachers, he decided not to teach them in the future if he had the right to do so.

In class, Mr. Bean particularly encourages positive and sympathetic attitude towards real learning. He wants his students to truly understand the matter, not to study because of the mark. According to him, when students “know” the issue, “understand” the matter, their results, consequently, will be better. Mr. Bean has also emphasized the practicality of the subjects many times. He appreciates practical fields such as medicine or biology as he thinks those achievements will be very useful to a large number of people such as helping them less hard but richer, or even save their life.

Mr. Bean also “extremely does not like” passive students, who do not take part in class and he shows that dislike very clearly. He likes students who raise their voice in class, who know to ask and ask when they need without hesitating. Mr. Bean just wants his students “to think” and then he is more than willing to give immediate and detailed answers. Even when he feels that his answers are not full and satisfactory enough, he checks again in different reliable sources to tell the students in the next lesson.

People who have chance to work with Mr. Bean for a period of time will realize the simplicity in his view of life. As one of his students summarized, he “...knows the importance of simplicity [...] with an interesting view on life”. He seems to have no big ambition in terms of position or title. A high post or a PhD is something vaguely familiar to him. He particularly does not want any ties. He loves to do what he likes, such as having a job to do every day (which is teaching), eating what he enjoys or simply having a few minute power nap to get back the energy.

Everyone that the researcher has chance to talk to loves Mr. Bean as well as is interested in his lessons. As one student said, Mr. Bean “*is gifted at conveying the knowledge*”. Regarding other teachers, they always talk about Mr. Bean with tender words and cheerful voice. When the name Mr. Bean is mentioned, everything going with it is friendly and interesting memories. It seems that wherever Mr. Bean goes, there will be fun moments. It cannot be denied that Mr. Bean has a really good relationship with other teachers and students.

2. Fast-track program

Basically, there are two programs in FELTE, ULIS, VNU: Mainstream and Fast-track program.

According to the regulations of VNU, Fast-track program is a special training system in VNU, in which modern and advanced training methods are applied in selected gifted students to help them approach the regional and international education standards in some critical training fields in VNU.

The Fast-track program in FELTE, ULIS, VNU was established in 2001-2002 and proved to be a successful program with high quality students after graduating (Tran, 2005, cited in Mai, 2010). Gifted students are provided with good learning conditions, talented teachers and modern teaching and training methods as the priority. The students are also required to have good knowledge of their majors, creative thinking ability, a good command of English and informatics competency, and personal qualities such as teamwork spirit, tolerance, confidence and the ability for personal and peer assessment.

3. E1K41 students

E1K41 is currently fourth-year Fast-Track students, who entered university in the academic year 2007-2008. They were carefully selected to attend the Fast-track program. Specifically, the students had to sit for an English language paper test, an IQ test and an oral interview in English. Until now, E1K41 students have been evaluated by Fast-track teachers as competent students both in their major and personal skills.

Members in E1K41 are entrusted to be responsible for much academic work in students' level activities such as Tutoring for Strategic Missions Class in VNU, English Club (EC), Assistants for Community Events (ACE) in ULIS, VNU, and many other conferences and meetings in order to share experience in studying effectively with freshmen and sophomores at the university.

Not only have E1K41 students taken part in various Youth Union activities, they have also been in charge of organizing events, such as Cultural Exploring Contest in ULIS, VNU (2009) and National Thai Speaking Contest (2010).

The students in E1K41 finished Critical Thinking Course as a selective subject in 2010 with excellent results, which is believed to help them improve their critical thinking dramatically. They are considered to be *open-minded* and have a high degree of autonomy thanks to their educational program with many debates and a range of assignments aiming at increasing student autonomy (Mai, 2010).

All students come from big cities and the majority of the students have no regional accent/dialect, speech mispronunciation or impediment caused by their hometown. This is an important detail that needs paying attention to because the findings discussed later are related to this detail.

B. Findings

Findings in this part are discussed to answer six research questions. The teacher's and students' perceptions of humor are presented; thereafter, comparisons are made where possible.

I. Research question 1: *What are the ways the teacher used to generate humor in the classroom?*

The findings in this part were collected based on the interview conducted with Mr. Bean, the questionnaire given to him on January 10th, 2011, and the researcher's observations. Sometimes, students' answers in the interviews were also added to have a more comprehensive answer to the research question.

Before presenting the answer to research question 1, it is important to understand Mr. Bean's perception of the importance of humor in general.

According to Mr. Bean, humor is beneficial to both students and teachers. To the students, firstly, humor helps the classroom atmosphere relaxing and pleasant. Secondly, humor helps students easier to understand the difficult points in the lessons and be less tired. **Mr. Bean also emphasized that the humor that he used mostly was added to the lessons and it was not simple chatting.** He said *"we should add humor into examples, explanation, etc."* All of the benefits he mentioned could be seen in his own students.

Talking about effects of humor on teachers, he said that when he used humor or told students fun stories, he was closer to them. The students would not look at him as "the unknown" or "the fearful". Besides, to himself, after using humor, there was a feeling of restfulness deep in his soul. He felt more relaxed, comfortable, which would make him work much better. *"Teaching or doing anything else will be better"*.

I.1. Mr. Bean's ways and types of generating humor revealed through the interviews with him and his students

This part presents the ways and types of humor used by Mr. Bean as perceived by himself as well as his students. Comparison will be drawn afterwards.

One thing needed to notice is that all sayings of Mr. Bean that made E1K41 students laugh were in **Vietnamese**. Therefore, in the later part of the study (Ways to generate humor), any examples quoted will be **the original sayings in the recording**.

When being asked "Do you have any preference for using any particular type of humor?", Mr. Bean shared that he used whichever humor he thought suitable. "*Maybe it is related to the content, or the way I usually say it, like mispronunciation. They are the usual ways*". So, it means he has two big ways to add laughter in the lessons. One is related to the content, and the other is word mispronunciation.

Planned or spontaneous?

Mr. Bean believed his humor was "impromptu, spontaneous". "*I usually spend time reading funny stories, watching films or TV. When seeing anything funny, I often remember. So when I come to class, if it is suitable, I tell it to the students. In fact, I do not plan anything*". The reason he could not plan, according to him, is that he could neither predict all of the activities in class nor predict to use this humor or the other one. Also, it is impossible to plan humor for a specific class and change into another way when he comes to other classes.

However, as shared by the students in the interviews, Mr. Bean had a fixed list of words and several ways that he used as humor in almost all classes and with many generations of students. Even some of his ways to

make humor were reused by another male teacher. Mr. Bean joked with E1K41 that he “invented” that way and the other teacher copied it. For example, Mr. Bean usually checked understanding of the students by asking: “*Có khả năng hiểu không?*” He explained that the question was translated directly from “*Can you understand?*” without implying anything. When hearing that, the students thought their teacher stressed on ability “*khả năng*”. That question is normally used when the teachers doubt students’ competency or they are “mentally deficient”. On the contrary, the students in E1K41 are competent and quick at the subject. It was this contrast that made the students laugh. They did not feel that the teacher was looking down on them. The teacher meant no offence, and that way of asking caused no offence, either.

Among six students interviewed, three students (Emma, Liv, and Becky) thought that the humor was spontaneous only. Two (Beth and Tracy) said that it was planned only, and one (Lyn) alleged that Mr. Bean’s humor was both planned and spontaneous.

Tracy believed that the humor use was planned because her elder sister also learnt with Mr. Bean and she shared with Tracy the same humor. Some of her friends in other classes also told her those jokes. That was why she thought that the origins/roots of the humor were the same. Mr. Bean edited them and changed a little in each year and class. The reason that Beth provided was also the same as Tracy’s. Besides, Beth said that it was very difficult to have both related, effective and fun examples in the lessons; therefore, Mr. Bean must have planned them. However, the researcher does not totally agree with Beth at this point. As discussed in more detail in the later part, Mr. Bean is “unpredictable” in all examples he gave the students. The details are surprisingly out of expectation, which make students laugh but still understand better the

lessons. In almost any point, he had the “stories” to illustrate. Thus, the researcher believes it is his innate ability, the natural endowment.

Emma, opposite to Beth, thought that because there were too many times Mr. Bean used humor in class and in every lesson, so it was impossible for him to plan them. Moreover, Liv noticed that in plenty of cases, the humorous explanations from the teacher actually lied in the students. They asked him questions or mentioned about particular topics, which led to Mr. Bean’s immediate jokes. At that time, how could he plan the questions or topics? Besides, in Becky’s opinion, humor comes from his personality, and his humor is spontaneous.

And finally, what Lyn said was exactly the summary of the first five people. She gave the researcher nearly all of the reasons above. That was why she concluded that Mr. Bean’s humor uses were both planned and spontaneous.

As can be seen, there is a difference between Mr. Bean’s perceptions of his humor and the students’ opinions about whether it was spontaneous or planned. The reason comes from the difference in the definition of “spontaneous”. Mr. Bean thought that his humor was not planned because in fact, he did not plan anything at home. He has a large source of humor materials in his head and is ready to use it whenever possible and suitable. Meanwhile, the students considered the similar humor uses as planned.

Content-related or unrelated?

Mr. Bean said that his humor was both content-related and unrelated. He used content-related humor for the lesson and content-unrelated for fun, which was inserted into class time.

“Yes, my humor has two kinds: related and unrelated. I usually provide students with content-related humorous examples. And unrelated humor is just for fun. I tease students something, like ‘Vietnam’s next top model’, which is an addition to the lesson. When a student comes late, I also tease her to make the class consider it not too serious, for example”.

All the interviewed students also said that Mr. Bean’s humor uses were both related and unrelated to the content. However, Emma emphasized that the majority of Mr. Bean’s humor was unrelated. Readers may have their own answer in the later part, which analyzes carefully the way Mr. Bean generated humor in the classroom.

I.2. Mr. Bean’s humor style revealed through the questionnaire

Before looking at the ways Mr. Bean generated humor in the classroom by observation, we will find out his humor style through Humor Styles Questionnaire by Rod Martin. In Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), there are 32 statements correlative with four humor styles: Affiliative, Self-Enhancing, Aggressive, and Self-Defeating (for interpretation of each style, refer to the previous chapter: Methodology). After each statement, there are seven degrees from Totally Disagree to Totally Agree.

Mr. Bean got the maximum point (7) for 8 statements of Affiliative humor. In total, he got 56 points for Affiliative humor, the highest number of points gained among four humor styles. Therefore, Affiliative is his humor style.

Affiliative humor is defined as “the tendency to share humor with others, tell jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh, enjoy laughing along with others” (HSQ, p.3).

Specifically, 8 statements are:

Totally Disagree	Totally Agree
1. I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.	5. I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh -- I seem to be a naturally humorous person .
9. I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself .	13. I laugh and joke a lot with my friends.
17. I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people.	21. I enjoy making people laugh .
25. I don't often joke around with my friends.	
29. I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people.	

Table 2: 8 statements belonging to Affiliative humor style in HSQ

Through Mr. Bean's choices in HSQ, there are some outstanding points that needed to be emphasized. He enjoys making people laugh and laughs along with other people. Especially, he thinks he is a "**naturally humorous person**" without working hard to amuse people. One way he uses is telling funny stories **about himself**, and another is **thinking of witty things** to say.

Those findings are believed to be useful to understand deeply the following parts.

I.3. Mr. Bean's ways of generating humor in the classroom

From observations and what the students recalled, there are six ways that Mr. Bean used to make humor in the classroom.

It is necessary to emphasize that all examples provided in the later part are those which made students in E1K41 laugh so long and loudly. Sometimes, they even could not stop laughing.

These six ways are categorized as follows:

1.	Speak dialects of some Vietnamese regions
2.	Mispronounce/distort pronunciation of English words on purpose
3.	Use informal/social language in everyday life
4.	Create vivid examples
5.	Satirize issues, faults in society or in the classroom
6.	Belittle himself

Table 3: Six ways to generate humor in the classroom of Mr. Bean

100% students remembered the two first ways that Mr. Bean used to make humor in the classroom (24 students described it in the paper questionnaire given to them). It was easy to understand because Mr. Bean used it in every lesson as his habit and even some words which are mispronounced become “slogan” of E1K41 students. The students encouraged each other when they had to sit for difficult tests/exams by “on-the-lips” mispronounced phrase: *Vezi ezi* (Very easy) or *Good nuck* (Good luck).

I.3.1. Speak dialects of some Vietnamese regions

Mr. Bean, in fact, has a nearly fixed list of words that he would speak in some dialects whenever he has to say them. Some students claimed that those dialects were from Thanh Hóa or Hà Tây (now known as Hanoi 2).

Some examples are: *bẫu* (*bảo* – say); *chuẩn* (*chuẩn* – exactly); *hiểu* (*hiểu* – understand); *hỏi* (*hỏi* – ask); *iem* (*em* – I); *dur* (*như thế nào* – how)...

I.3.2. Mispronounce/distort pronunciation of English words on purpose

To some extent, this way is similar to the first way. It should be emphasized that Mr. Bean mispronounces the words on purpose, not because he cannot pronounce them correctly. Mr. Bean had time studying abroad and when he speaks or reads something to class seriously, his pronunciation is precise. Some words that Mr. Bean mispronounces are: *padallel* (parallel); (*t-type*) type; t-ea – tea); *vezi ezì* (very easy); *good nuck* (good luck); *Diết* (Yes); *Sidiết* (Serious).

In the second way, there are three sub-ways that Mr. Bean used to generate humor in the classroom, presented in the following table.

2 nd way: Mispronounce/distort pronunciation of English words on purpose	a. Changing a number of particular sounds
	b. Inventing ways to remember difficult terminologies in the subject
	c. Collecting mispronounced words from beginning students

Table 4: The second way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean

- a. There are some basic rules Mr. Bean applies to change the sounds when he mispronounces English words.
 - i. letter “r” changes into “d” (*padallel* - parallel)
 - ii. letter “l” changes into “n” (*nuck* – luck). It is similar to the way “l” is mispronounced in Vietnam (l → n).
 - iii. letter “t(h)” changes into “t” (*t-ype* – type; *t-ea* – tea)
 - iv. Yes → “Diết” is commonly-heard in everyday life (talks or fun stories). However, hardly can the researcher find any document that explains the rule of this case.
- b. The second sub-way is that Mr. Bean came up with very interesting and creative ways for students to remember difficult terminologies. Several words that every member in E1K41 recalled in the questionnaire are:

Implicature: *Impli cà chua*

Deontic: *D là do, do là phải làm gì, hay không làm gì.*

Epistemic: *E là e sợ, sợ là đúng hay sai*

(Deontic, Epistemic: when learning how to distinguish two types of Modality in chapter 6: Modality of the subject).

- c. The third sub-way is that Mr. Bean collected the way to mispronounce words from beginning students to share with the class. Those students are from lower level and they have a very interesting “student way” to remember how to write the words or how to pronounce them. Those “creative thoughts” invented to help them not forget the spelling are really surprising and funny.

Here are some examples:

Because: Bí kho giữ

Comfortable: cơm phở thịt bò

Consequence: con xé quần

Excellent: ếch xào lăn

Have: Ha - ve

IELTS: Eo éo

Injure: In – chu - che

Vietnam to the Vietnamese: Việt Nam to thế, Việt Nam mẹ sê

I.3.3. Use informal/ social language in everyday life

Mr. Bean used informal personal pronouns and social expressions to create humor in the classroom as illustrated in the following figure.

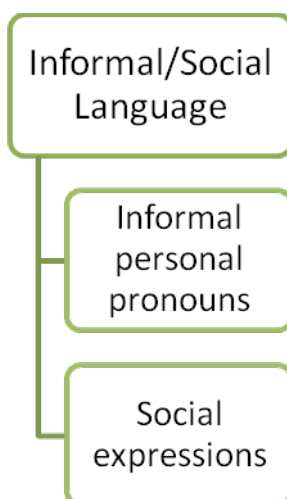


Figure 1: The third way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean

- a. Use “very informal” personal pronouns of the ordinary people (*will be discussed in detail in way number 4: Creating vivid examples*)
- b. Use social expressions in everyday life. All of those expressions are in **Vietnamese**.

Some of the examples are:

- **Chém/chém gió**: This is a teenage language (from 9X generation). It was invented about three years ago (2007), which means “exaggerating something or boasting about something”. People “*chém gió*” because of different reasons, but mostly just for fun and for some people it is the tool to polish, and promote personal image (<http://dangnba.blogspot.com>).

Mr. Bean used “*chém/chém gió*” when one student talks something “confidently and passionately” but not exactly. That student may exaggerate that story to make other people more interested in what he/she is talking about or help people have fun together.

- “**Đút/đút phựt**”: Something “**đút**” when it is not successful or does not happen as expected.

I.3.4. Create vivid examples

The two subjects that Mr. Bean was in charge of teaching to E1K41 students in semester I and II of the fourth year were considered “*difficult and boring*” by the students themselves. However, thanks to the teacher, the subjects became “*fresh, interesting to learn*”. Some students shared that:

“He is the reason that I love study [S..]”

“He softens the burden of two boring subjects for us with his great sense of humor”

Recently, in the discussion about the teaching improvement in the practicum of the year 2011 between the researcher, her peers, and her supervisor, one student said that, in her mind, there were two groups of teachers. The first group included those teachers whose lessons she felt not very useful. The other group of teachers provided such useful lessons that she would feel regretful if she did not go to their class. Mr. Bean falls into the second group. The researcher’s supervisor in the practicum also shared that:

“He is such a person. Not everyone can be like him.”

“His way of teaching is not standard, but very effective.”

In fact, the final result of the first subject of E1K41 students was high and the students as well as the teacher were satisfied and happy. One of the important factors that brought high marks for the students was the vivid and interesting examples from Mr. Bean. All of his examples were in **Vietnamese**. It seems that the students listen to his examples like they listen to fun short stories. Any example has the scene, plot and characters. However, it is necessary to emphasize again that those illustrated points originated in the theory the students needed to understand.

The following figure illustrates the two sub-ways related to vivid examples Mr. Bean used to create humor in the classroom.

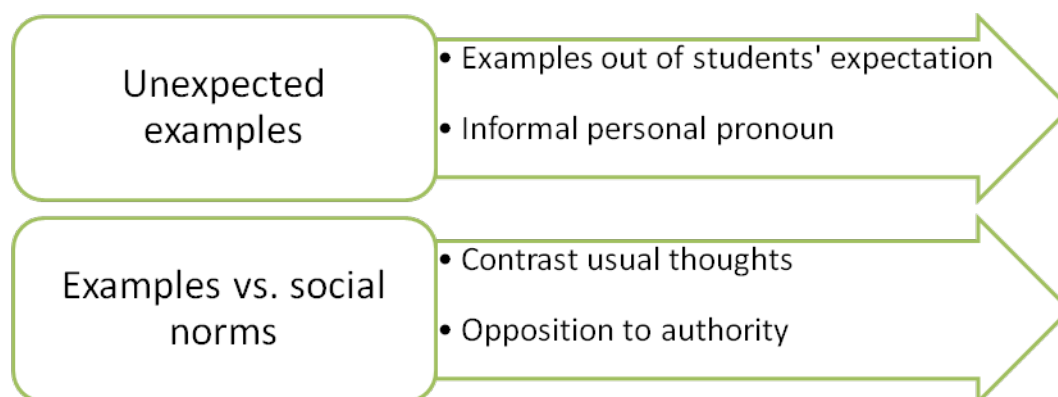


Figure 2: The fourth way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean

a. Mr. Bean took advantage of the third way to generate humor (discussed earlier) to apply in his examples, which is using “informal personal pronouns”. “Informal personal pronouns” mentioned here, for example, are: “*nó, mày, tao, con/thằng đấy*”...

For instance, in learning about *types of epistemic commitment*, the second type is *Evidentials* with *Direct* and *Indirect Evidentials*.

Direct evidentials: show the speaker’s firsthand experience with sensory evidence carrying the main weight.

E.g.: I heard that you are not coming.

Indirect evidentials: are about second-hand facts.

E.g.: I was informed that she had resigned.

For the students to understand better this point, Mr. Bean gave this example:

“*Ví dụ em bảo là: “Con **đấy** bị nghiện”*”

*Nó quay sang bảo: “**Tao** tát cho mày một cái bây giờ”*

*Nhưng nếu em nói là: ‘**Tao** nghe nói’ hay ‘có đứa nói là’ thì không sao”*

One very special point in Mr. Bean’s examples or explanations is that the details were mostly unexpected or even contrary to expectations. As one of his students said about him: “*You can never guess what he’s thinking about (If he were a woman, he would be a “đanh đá” and mysterious one ☺)*”. Rarely can any teacher think of the detail **addiction** (**nghiện**) in the previous example.

Or when learning about Personal Modality with two sub-groups:

- a. Those that express comment on the extent to which the speaker believes that he is saying is true.
- b. Those that express comments on the attitude of the speaker rather than the truth-value of what is said.

E.g.: *Fortunately, Mary called the police.*

Wisely, Mary called the police.

Mr. Bean explained and then gave students the more “comprehensible” story:

*“**Fortunately, Mary called the police**, so **fortunately** có thể liên quan đến chúng tôi, ví dụ: chúng tôi bị nạn, may là **con** Mary nó gọi cảnh sát.*

***Con** Mary bị theo, rất may là nó gọi điện cho cảnh sát.*

*Nhưng nếu nói **Wisely, Mary called the police** thì chỉ nói tới Mary thôi”.*

As can be seen, with only a simple sentence as example in the book: “*Fortunately, Mary called the police*” Mr. Bean added more details to make it a story like “**we have an accident** and fortunately, Mary called

the police”; another situation may be “Mary was **stalked** and fortunately, she called the police”. The informal pronouns he used also contributed to the familiarity to his characters. It seems that the students were directly taking part in the story line (*we have an accident – chúng tôi bị nạn*).

b. The second way Mr. Bean applied in his examples was coming up with examples which were in marked contrast to social norms or usual thoughts.

When teaching *Propositional content, Predicates and Arguments*, he gave some examples to illustrate what and how many arguments there were in a sentence:

The woman hit the man (with a ruler).

The “normal” seen example in the book is “*The man hit the woman with a ruler*”. Now, he changed it conversely, and that example brought laughs and spiritual satisfaction to all-girl-class like E1K41. Mr. Bean even explained it further “*the compulsory elements are the man and the woman; the ruler is only optional*”. **Ở đây cần là ai đánh ai. Đánh bằng tay, bằng thước, bằng dép, bằng gì cũng được đúng không?**

One point he made in the lesson was “some ways of saying are acceptable in some cultures only while unacceptable in the others. For example, saying “*You are my dog*” is accepted in Britain not Greece.” Talking about Vietnam, Mr. Bean said “*In Vietnam, chó con is acceptable with small children, but not acceptable with adults. Ví dụ với bọn trẻ con mà nói: chó con của mẹ thì được nhưng mà ví dụ vợ nói với chồng thì...*”

I.3.5. Satirize issues, faults in society or in the classroom

The fifth way is that Mr. Bean satirized mistakes of students in the classroom or issues in society. Its sub-ways are presented in the following figure. _

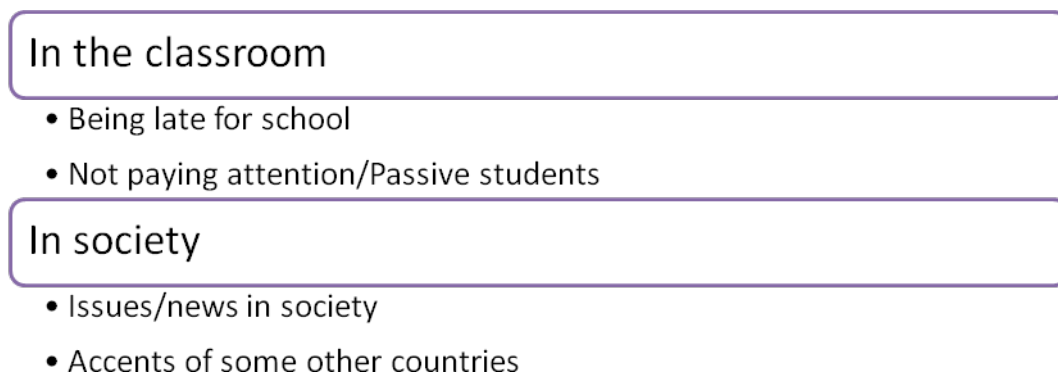


Figure 3: The fifth way and its sub-ways to generate humor of Mr. Bean

I.3.5.1. In the classroom

a. Being late for school

Although the nature of what he said to the students in the classroom when they made mistakes was satire, Mr. Bean, in fact, made the mistakes less serious and the class atmosphere less heavy.

When one student in class came late 30 minutes that day, he said:

Phân em một chỗ ở kia

Mr. Bean: Tắc đường ở đâu hả em?

Student: Dạ, tắc ở đường Láng, Lê Trọng Tấn, Cầu Giấy

*Mr. Bean: **I saw***

When the class burst into laughs because of his “**I saw**”, he explained “*I saw là tôi đã hiểu đấy nhé*”. The reason the class laughed was that they thought **I saw** means “that’s why the students came so late, up to 30 minutes”. He said it somehow ironically, and the reason was actually assumed to be true by both the teacher and students. Mr. Bean

asked the student “*where is the traffic jam?*” means he considered it as her reason to be late for school, which is a very common reason of many students. The student did get stuck in the traffic jam, and she also immediately and “naturally” shared with the whole class without hesitating: “*Traffic jam in Láng, Lê Trọng Tấn, Cầu Giấy Street*”. The “perfect combination” between Mr. Bean and the student made the whole class laugh.

Another time, another student came late with a mouthful of breakfast, he said to her: “*Bị sưng răng hả em?*”, which criticized not only her lateness but her manner. Both that student and the class could not help laughing when hearing that.

b. Not paying attention to the lessons/ Passive students

When there were students who did not pay attention to the lessons and had to ask the teacher again about what they had to do, Mr. Bean “teased” them: “*Xúy Vân!*”. “*Xúy Vân*” refers to any inattentive student.

Passive students are another never-end topic of Mr. Bean. **It should be noted that those sharings were about students in other classes, not members in E1K41.** Whenever mentioning it, he said concernedly and seemed annoyed. As discussed earlier, Mr. Bean “hates” passive students, who only “sit” in class without taking part actively in the lessons, asking something or contributing their ideas.

In semester VII, Mr. Bean taught the class a subject in the following way. The students were given materials to read (in forms of slides of each lesson) beforehand; then, the teacher would instruct the students in class based mainly on the provided materials. Therefore, the main tasks of the students were reading materials at home to have some idea of the chapter, listening to the teacher to have better understanding,

answering his questions and asking him anything if needed. In fact, answering and asking questions are mentioned because the subject Mr. Bean taught in semester VII (or called: subject 1 in this research) was considered difficult to the students and that the teacher or especially the students asked questions was unavoidable. Mr. Bean thought that when students asked question, they, together with their instructors, were on the way to gain the knowledge and they would understand it more deeply. Not only did Mr. Bean explain to them, but he also foresaw the difficult and controversial points that the students would ask. He said: “*Rồi, đoạn sau còn một chỗ **cãi nhau** nữa cơ*”. And, about making confused points clear, the desire to “pursue thorough enquiry” from the teacher of E1K41 is beyond Mr. Bean’s expectation.

That was why when coming to other classes which did not have that habit, Mr. Bean would not be satisfied. Researchers have shown that student questioning is also important in student learning. When students formulate their own questions to guide their thinking, they develop a positive attitude towards reading and became "independent in the process of reading and learning from text" (Singer, 1978; cited in Lin, 1996, p.14). However, Asian students in general are passive and seldom ask teachers questions. If they have any problems, they will only ask their classmates who are sitting around them (Lin, 1996). When saw no response from the students, either positive or negative, Mr. Bean could not stand it.

After he devotedly taught anything to students, but they did not understand, he seemed very angry and powerless. He used “very strong words” to describe his situation as well as his feelings. For example, he said:

“*Mình **bổ như bổ củi** rồi, hôm sau hỏi lại không biết gì*”

“Ban đầu lớp cũng đông, nhưng về sau nó cũng **chia tay hoảng hốt**”

I.3.5.2. In society

In the lesson about *variables in the function of sentence meaning*, there is one function which is *interpersonal function*. One of its purposes is to influence people behavior and get things done as *instrumental function*. Mr. Bean had something related to “*instrument*”:

“*Thế mọi người đã nghe câu ‘mồm miệng đỡ chân tay’ chưa?*”

*Hay là những cô gái **thân dài**”*

Another time the students were helpless with laughter was when Mr. Bean imitated the accent of Indian or Chinese people as their English accents are usually known as very bad and difficult to hear. Due to the limitation of a written report, the researcher cannot describe the accent to the readers. One part of the recording is available as reference if needed.

As mentioned above, Mr. Bean always updates social information, particularly what is related to teaching and translating/interpreting. Few months ago, people cared about the regretful mistake of a very famous and experienced Vietnamese MC, Mr. Lại Văn Sâm. Mr. Bean was very angry as what the MC interpreted was barely like what the speaker said. His overreaction led to laughter and he also quoted some comments on Facebook about this issue such as *Lại Văn Sâm – Luận Văn Sai*.

I.3.6. Belittle himself

Sometimes, Mr. Bean said to the students as if he was a miserable teacher, who had to “suffer from” naughty, even mischievous or lazy, passive students. He said as if he had suffered from “great misery due to

not-good students”. Although he was “heart-broken”, he still tried to teach them, because of the reasons related to “economic conditions”.

Example 1

(Mình bỏ như bỏ củi rồi, hôm sau hỏi lại không biết gì)

*Nhưng thôi, vì **miếng cơm manh áo**, mình cũng đành **ngậm đắng nuốt cay** mà dạy*

....

*Nhà **không có điều kiện***

Example 2

Students: *(Phải **cam chịu** thôi thầy ạ)*

Teacher: *Ai **cam chịu**? Có mà mình đang phải **cam chịu** đây này!*

The second type in “Belittle himself” was mentioned by some students in the questionnaires. He “proudly showed” his disadvantages like “*Mình già rồi* (I am an old man)”, “*Khổ, mình ngại*” (I am shy to...). It is important to notice that his voice when acting like that was very special. It showed clearly the irony and untruthfulness in what he was saying. That was why the students could not help laughing.

Conclusion

In summary, Mr. Bean used six main ways to create humor in the classroom, as presented in table 3.

1.	Speak dialects of some Vietnamese regions
2.	Mispronounce/distort pronunciation of English words on purpose
3.	Use informal/social language in everyday life
4.	Creating vivid examples
5.	Satirize issues, faults in society or in the classroom
6.	Belittle himself

Table 3: Six ways to generate humor in the classroom of Mr. Bean

One special common way in these six ways is that they are in Vietnamese and related to Vietnam such as Vietnamese dialects, personal pronouns or issues in Vietnam.

Findings in a related study

In the study “Appropriate and inappropriate uses of humor by teachers” by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006), the researchers asked 284 undergraduate students to list examples of “appropriate and suitable” humor. The students had no trouble identifying the examples in this category.

This student sample generated 712 examples of appropriate teacher humor, which the researchers placed in four different categories. The researchers called the first, which contained almost half the listed examples, “**related humor.**” This humor linked with course materials.

The second category was **unrelated humor.** These first two categories contained more than 90% of the examples students provided.

Examples in this second category included some teasing of student groups or individual students, or some stereotypical student behavior such as procrastinating.

The remainder of the appropriate examples was **self-disparaging humor** in which the instructor made jokes or told stories that belittled him or herself. Then there was a very small category of **unintentional or unplanned humor** when something funny happened spontaneously in class.

The researchers also note that there was overlap between these categories. As can be seen, the last category “unplanned humor” may overlap with three other categories because “related”, “unrelated”, and “self-disparaging humor” can be “unintentional humor”.

Comparison between Mr. Bean’s and Western teachers’ ways to generate humor in the classroom

Interestingly, Mr. Bean and Western teachers used very similar ways to create humor in the classroom, and all of the humor uses were effective and appropriate as evaluated by the students. Specifically, the three similar categories of humor reported by a large number of students in the two studies are:

1. Related humor – the teacher used humorous examples for the lesson/course.
2. Unrelated humor – the teacher teased his/her students.
3. Self-disparaging humor – the teacher belittled him/herself.

II. Research question 2: *What are the students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the humor used by the teacher in the classroom?*

It cannot be denied that Mr. Bean's humor had profound and positive effects on the students. Firstly, they were beneficial academic effects as discussed earlier:

“He is the reason that I love study [S...]”

“He softens the burden of two boring subjects for us with his great sense of humor”

But much more important is that Mr. Bean's positive thinking influenced the students. Usually, students or youngsters in general do not like being told to do anything or taught any lessons from the elders. They seem forceful to listen to it and “publicly” or “secretly” rebel. However, to the researcher's surprise, life-lessons told by Mr. Bean penetrated naturally and deeply into many students. The following sharing is part of one student's note on Facebook, a very popular social network of students and youngsters in general.

“Today listen to ‘very easy’ of Mr. Bean about life-lessons, I feel so bright and cheerful 😊 He said we should always smile, for those who hate us will be angry to dead because they think we are much happier than them, that's why we smile; and when we smile, everybody wants to talk to us. He said we should be satisfied with our life as we are now happier than many people, do what we can, which means I should not have inferiority complex if I did not do good in school forever (>"< I must have some good points making up for my slow learning?) Then, he said ‘eat little’, what's the use of eating much to suffer from gout =)) I was greatly encouraged because for the last few days I have had to eat rice porridge, no ice-cream, yoghurt, snails...=)) Well, I love his lessons so much, but there is only one chapter left :|”

There are also many “statuses” that students shared freely on many kinds of social networks. Hardly is any teacher held in deep affection on various means of communication (Facebook, yahoo, blog...) by many students like Mr. Bean.

“I like him the most”

“I also really admire him”

....

In the questionnaires distributed to the students, the first question asks about the effectiveness degree of Mr. Bean’s humor perceived by the students. The following chart shows the results of the first question:

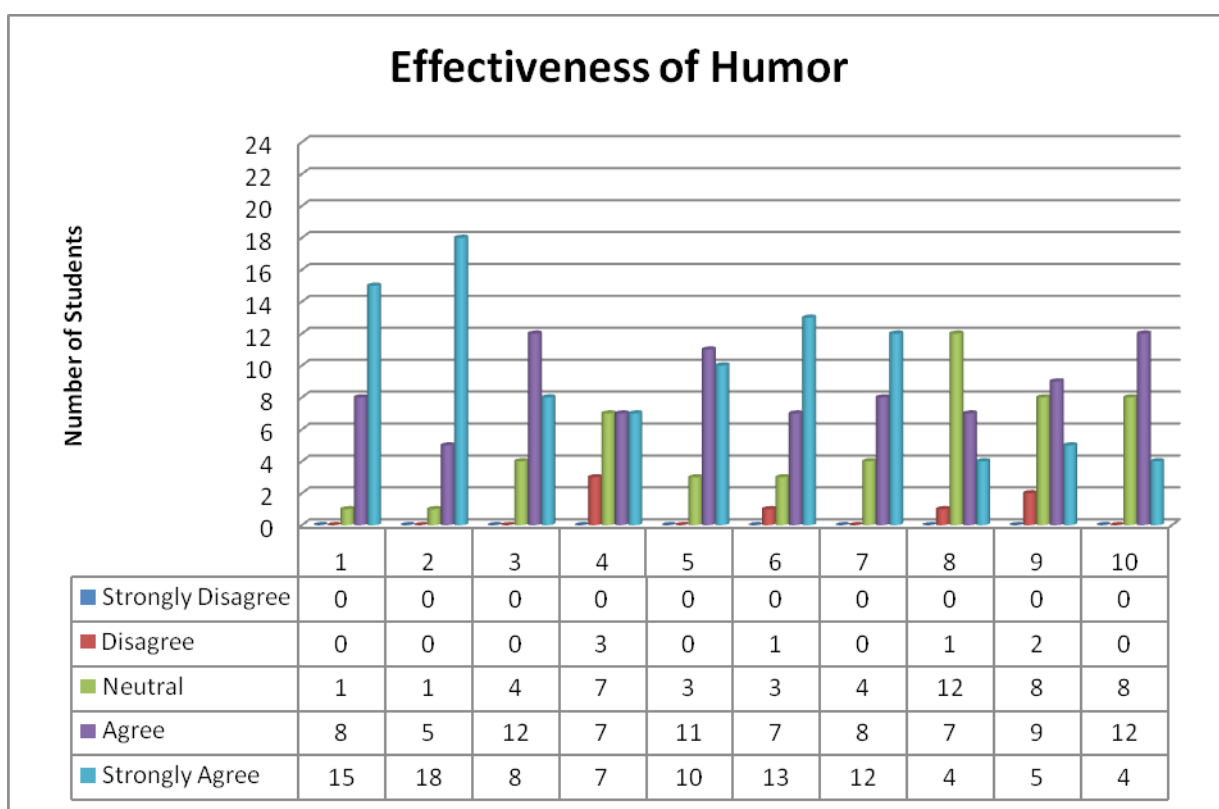


Chart 1: Effectiveness of Mr. Bean’s humor perceived by the students

To be easier to analyze, the researcher grouped the degrees as follows:

- Strongly disagree and disagree

- Neutral

- Agree and strongly agree

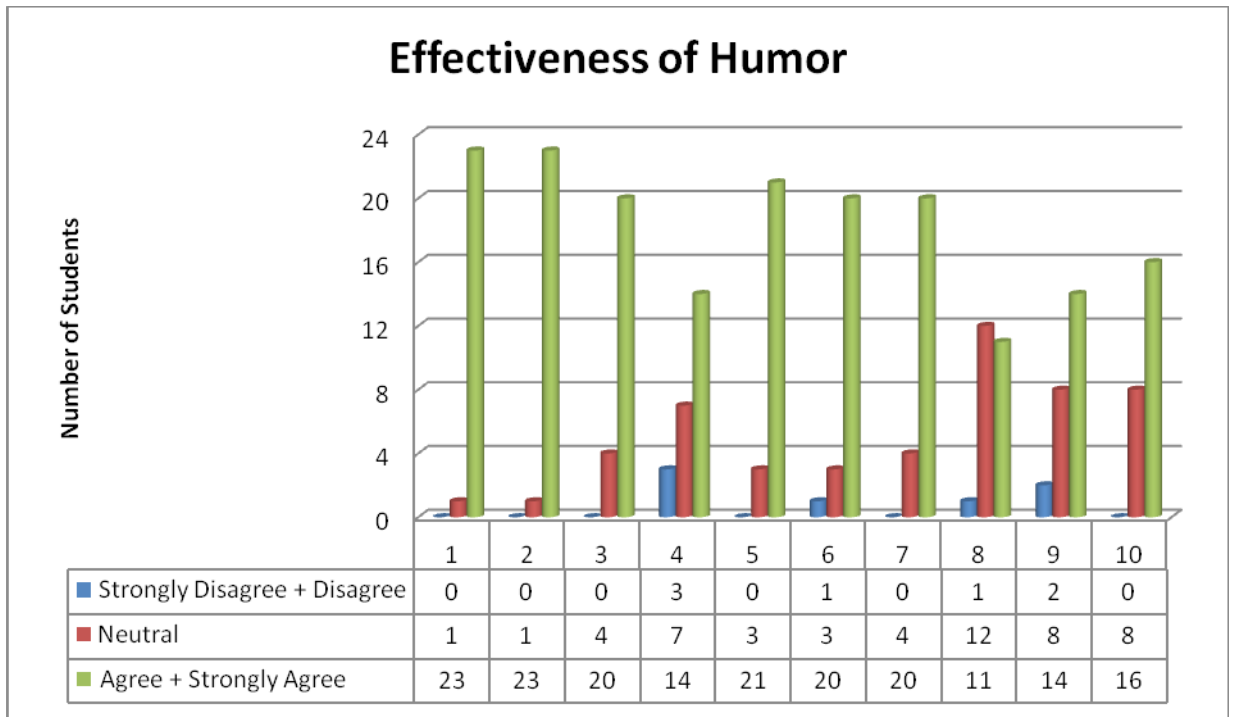


Chart 2: Effectiveness of Mr. Bean’s humor perceived by the students

- 1 Humor makes me feel more relaxed in my language classroom.
- 2 Humor creates more comfortable and pleasant learning environment.
- 3 Humor makes me feel at ease to participate in class.
- 4 Humor helps to increase my interest in learning the subject.
- 5 My teacher’s use of humor makes him more approachable in class.
- 6 I look forward to attending a class in which the teacher uses humor.
- 7 Humor helps the lesson more interesting.
- 8 Humor helps to hold my attention in classroom.
- 9 Humor helps me to remember the lesson better.
- 10 Humor generally improves my ability to learn a subject in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment overall.

As shown in chart 1, no student chose “Strongly Disagree” for the 10 items. Only a minority of the students chose Disagree because they viewed some of Mr. Bean’s humor were not appropriate. Therefore, in this part, the effectiveness of humor will be focused on. Inappropriateness aspects will be discussed comprehensibly in the later part, and readers will understand more clearly why there were students disagreeing with some items of the 10 statements provided.

Item 1: Humor makes me feel more relaxed in my language classroom. One student chose neutral. This student is Emma, who belongs to “very negative” group towards Mr. Bean’s humor. The readers will understand more about Emma’s choices later. 23 (96%) students chose *Agree and Strongly Agree*. Almost all of the students feel more relaxed in class thanks to Mr. Bean’s humor, which is beneficial for them mentally and academically. Besides, it would be a failure if students go to class because of responsibility or attendance checklist. When they feel more relaxed, going to school will be joyful instead of forceful. This positive effect was seen in the majority of the students.

Item 2: Humor creates more comfortable and pleasant learning environment shows the same result as item 1. Only Emma chose *Neutral* and the rest of the class chose *Agree and Strongly Agree*. The learning environment as discussed earlier is very important for students to absorb knowledge. A student who is in a fun and comfortable environment learns more and enjoys class better than one who is not (Rhonda, 2007). According to Splinis (2009), “creating a comfortable environment in a classroom is a must. [...] It is important to make sure that students are comfortable in our ‘classroom community’. They will be able to learn better because they would not be so nervous, tense, and worried about other things and will be free to learn”. Therefore, when 23 students

agreed that they had more comfortable and pleasant learning environment, it is a good start for their better studying.

Item 3: Humor makes me feel at ease to participate in class.

Four students chose *Neutral* and 20 (83%) students chose *Agree and Strongly Agree*. Two of these four students are Beth and Emma. Beth explained that she usually did not mind asking Mr. Bean questions. However, sometimes, she was afraid of being made fun of in front of the class, especially when she has a quite high face saving level. “*I remember one time H (one student in class) asked something, Mr. Bean teased her, I am really afraid of situations like that*”. Except for these students, the researcher could see the class was more active (in terms of asking questions) in the teacher’s lessons. Even some quiet students also raised their voice in class.

Item 4: Humor helps to increase my interest in learning the subject. In this statement, three people chose *Disagree*, and seven *Neutral*, 14 *Agree and Strongly Agree*. Beth and Becky were two of the three choosing *Disagree*. They both said that they were just interested in the teacher’s humorous examples or stories, but the subject’s nature was not interesting; Becky even thought that it was, sometimes, “*useless*”. She did not know why students had to learn it and what it was good for.

To most of the students, when thinking of the subject, at first, they felt it was “difficult” and “boring”. However, after attending Mr. Bean’s lessons, they thought it was “*fresh, more interesting*” or at least “*less boring*”.

Item 5: My teacher's use of humor makes him more approachable in class. No student chose *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree*; Three chose *Neutral* and 21 (87,5 %) *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. In fact, many students in the class at the beginning of the lesson or in the break time usually went to talk to him. As said earlier, he and E1 has (at least) one common point which is watching/known international channels like Star world with famous shows such as American Idol, American's Next Top Model, or The Bachelorette. These shows were one of their topics to discuss. Neither did the teacher go out to wait until class time nor there were two different worlds in the class. Liv "*can talk or ask him anything. It is very easy*", or as Becky shared "*in class he uses humor and we feel closer. Also in the break, he spends time talking or making jokes, the relationship grows closer, too. See, we always huddle together for a talk with him*".

Item 6: I look forward to attending a class in which the teacher uses humor. Again, Emma chose *Disagree*, three chose *Neutral*, 7 *Agree* and 13 *Strongly Agree*. Emma explained simply: "*Of course, I do not expect to go to class because of those humor uses, but knowledge instead*".

The researcher remembers one time when Liv went to school late because it was raining heavily that day and Liv could not catch her bus. Her mother even suggested she stay at home. (Liv's house is about 17 km far away from the university). However, she told her mother that she could not miss any class of Mr. Bean. Much to surprise, some students even regretfully realized that they had only few lessons left at the end of semester VII with Mr. Bean, and they felt very happy when they knew that E1 would have chance to learn with Mr. Bean in the next semester. Lyn said that she really wanted to go class because of Mr. Bean's humor.

Tracy also considered humor as her motivation to go to class, especially when she did not want to go to class that day.

Item 7: Humor helps the lesson more interesting. No student chose the first two options. 20 chose *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. Hence, it cannot be denied that the lesson was more appealing when the teacher used humor, which is surely a big benefit for students.

Item 8: Humor helps to hold my attention in classroom. Only four chose *Strongly Agree*, seven *Agree*, 12 *Neutral* and one *Disagree*. Beth explained that sometimes she could not pay attention to the lesson because she sat next to Liv and she was too excited at Mr. Bean's humor, even rocked with laughter and continued discussing that topic. Consequently, Beth did not know what point Mr. Bean was explaining. To Emma, for some humor she did not like, she did something instead like drawing, and when Mr. Bean came back to the theory, she did not realize it and missed the points. In contrast, to some other students, when they were distracted from the lessons, humor called their attention as people around them were all doubled up with laughter.

Item 9: Humor helps me to remember the lesson better. Two students *Disagree* and 14 *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. One of the two students who chose *Disagree* explained that remembering the lesson or not depended on the nature of the lessons. There were terms or the subject that were difficult to understand and humor helped students “*sometimes just remember temporarily. After the lesson or a few days later, they may forget what it is and just remember the funny things associated with the terms or knowledge*”.

Item 10: Humor generally improves my ability to learn a subject in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and

conducive learning environment overall. No one chose the first two options. Eight students chose *Neutral* and 16 chose *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*. Lyn said the theory of the subject was really difficult. Lyn always read book and materials before going to class, but it did not help her to understand thoroughly. Vivid and humorous examples of Mr. Bean helped her to remember and understand easily the lesson. “*Next time only by hearing the words or remember the humor, can I relate immediately to the points in the lesson.*” Many times besides the interview, Liv shared with the researcher how she learned more effectively thanks to Mr. Bean’s humor. Not only because of the examples he gave, there were other factors also contributing substantially. “*I go to all classes and pay attention to every word of him because of his humor and the atmosphere it brings to our class. I see that I learn much better than other subjects in the third year like Grammar or Phonology*”. Becky explained further “*he knows how to combine humor into explanation or some concepts and it becomes very easy to remember. His examples are life-like, very humorous, and closely related to the lesson*”. Tracy agreed with both Liv and Becky as she thought Mr. Bean’s jokes were mostly examples in the lessons and “*when we laugh, we feel relaxed; we have the impression; we remember those examples, which help us relate to the lesson easily*”. There is no doubt that the examples are beneficial for the students; Emma admitted that the simplification of explanation helped her to learn the subject better, but not all the jokes.

Conclusion

It can be seen that only item 8 (*Humor helps to hold my attention in classroom*) received less than 50% of *Agree and Strongly Agree* (11 students).

The largest number of students chose *Disagree* is in item 4 with three students (*Humor helps to increase my interest in learning the subject*). They separated clearly between “like the humor”, “like the teacher” and “like the subject”.

23 over 24 students chose *Agree and Strongly Agree* for the first two items. They realized markedly that they were more relaxed and the class atmosphere was more comfortable.

Comparison between the teacher’s and students’ perceptions

In the previous parts, the researcher presented Mr. Bean’s perceptions of the importance of humor in general, which are also the beneficial effects that humor had on his students and himself. Also, students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of Mr. Bean’s humor were presented. The following table is a brief comparison between Mr. Bean’s perceptions and his students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of humor in class.

Mr. Bean	Students	Findings
<i>“humor helps the classroom’s atmosphere relaxing and pleasant”</i>	23/24 students <i>Agree and Strongly Agree</i> (Item 2)	Almost all of the students (96%) have these benefits.
<i>“to the difficult points in the lessons, humor helps students easier to understand and less tired”</i>	Less tired: Item 1: 23/24 students <i>Agree and Strongly Agree</i>	
	Easier to understand	All of students interviewed (6) agreed with this point. In the questionnaire, no item matches.
<i>“teachers will be closer to students”</i>	21/24 students <i>Agree and Strongly Agree</i> (Item 5)	Most of the students (87,5%) see their teacher is more approachable.

Table 5: Comparison between teacher’s and students’ perceptions

Clearly, what the teacher saw beneficial for his students was also agreed by many students in the class. It can be said that Mr. Bean’s humor is successful in at least 3 fields: students’ feeling, class’s atmosphere, and teacher-students’ relationship.

III. Research question 3 and research question 4

3. Is there any humor used by the teacher that the students view as inappropriate?

4. If yes (question 3), what humor used by the teacher do the students view as inappropriate?

Firstly, in this part, the teacher's and students' perceptions of appropriate and inappropriate humor in general are presented. Then, detailed answers to research question 3 and 4 are to be discussed.

III.1. Teacher's perceptions of inappropriate humor in general

Before considering students' view on this matter, it is necessary to look at the teacher's perception of appropriate and inappropriate humor.

Answering the question if he saw there were appropriate and inappropriate humors in general, he said "yes". In his opinion, appropriateness depended on several factors such as "*religion, sex, gender, or in Vietnam we call it region. For example, if you use humor about religion like Buddhism or Catholicism, and it is too discriminative, your humor does not work*".

Regarding Mr. Bean's humor itself, he believed that "***almost what I did in class is appropriate. Fun talks, stories or little vivid examples are for students to understand the lesson more easily. Inappropriateness may depend on each student***".

III.2. Students' perception of inappropriate humor in general

One question in the questionnaire using Likert Scale (from 1 to 5 – Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) asked students about two factors of inappropriate humor in the classroom according to some researchers (in Literature Review). The students' answers are shown in the following chart:

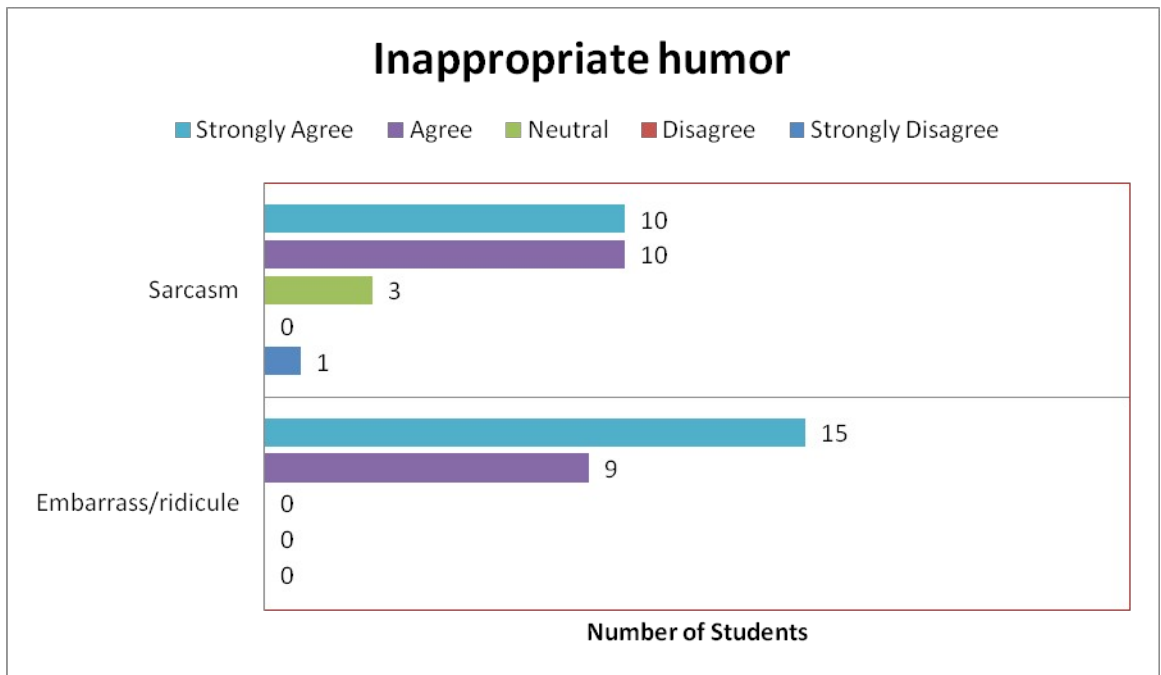


Chart 3: Inappropriate humor in general perceived by the students

a. Humor should not be used to embarrass or ridicule students.

All of the students agreed and strongly agreed with this statement. They did not want to be one of the victims or their friends to be hurt by humor in the classroom. The reason was that being ridiculed “*students feel ashamed, they may lose confidence in participating in the lesson*”. They even “*feel insulted when become jokes in front of other people*”. How about the rest of class feelings when their friends are embarrassed? “*The image of the teacher in the eyes of the students can be destroyed*” because their peers were not respected.

b. Sarcasm is inappropriate and should not be used.

20 students agreed and strongly agreed with this statement. According to them, sarcasm could not be used for students as students should be respected.

One student chose *Strongly Disagree*, and it was Becky. Becky explained her choice as follows:

“Sarcasm is one kind of joke, and when it is used properly, it will be funny. I am also a satirist. For example, sometimes, he [Mr. Bean] describes some teachers, mimics or imitates their gaits, which is totally appropriate, provided that it is not too touchy to some people or does not target at the students in the class”.

Becky took her as an example. One time she was late with full of breakfast in mouth, Mr. Bean said “*bị sưng răng hả em*”. She found it “*fine, nothing uncomfortable*”, and it still brought laugh to the whole class. Becky concluded that sarcasm could be used for two subjects: one was who felt okay about it and the other was who was not there.

With the same point of view, Emma chose *Neutral*. She said that sarcasm was appropriate when it targeted the third party, who was not there. Also, in her opinion, “*sarcasm shows a sharp point of view as well as the teacher’s knowledge and experience*”.

Therefore, “***sarcasm should be used but in the hands of who knows how to use it***” (Becky).

III.3. Research question 3: *Is there any humor used by the teacher that the students view as inappropriate?*

In the questionnaire, the students were asked whether they thought there was inappropriate humor of Mr. Bean. The result is illustrated below:



Chart 4: Inappropriateness of Mr. Bean’s humor perceived by the students

13 students said “Yes”, and 11 students said “No”. It should be noted that among 13 students, two students said that they became more and more familiar with Mr. Bean’s style. They felt a little uncomfortable in the few lessons at the beginning of the course only. Another two students claimed that only one or two humorous examples of Mr. Bean throughout the semester were inappropriate. Besides, Lyn emphasized that some humor uses were “*not very appropriate only*” and she liked them only less than other jokes.

III.4. Research question 4: *If yes (question 3), what humor used by the teacher do the students view as inappropriate?*

Ideas from the students were written in the questionnaire as well as shared in the interviews. Basically, there are some reasons why they thought there was inappropriate humor.

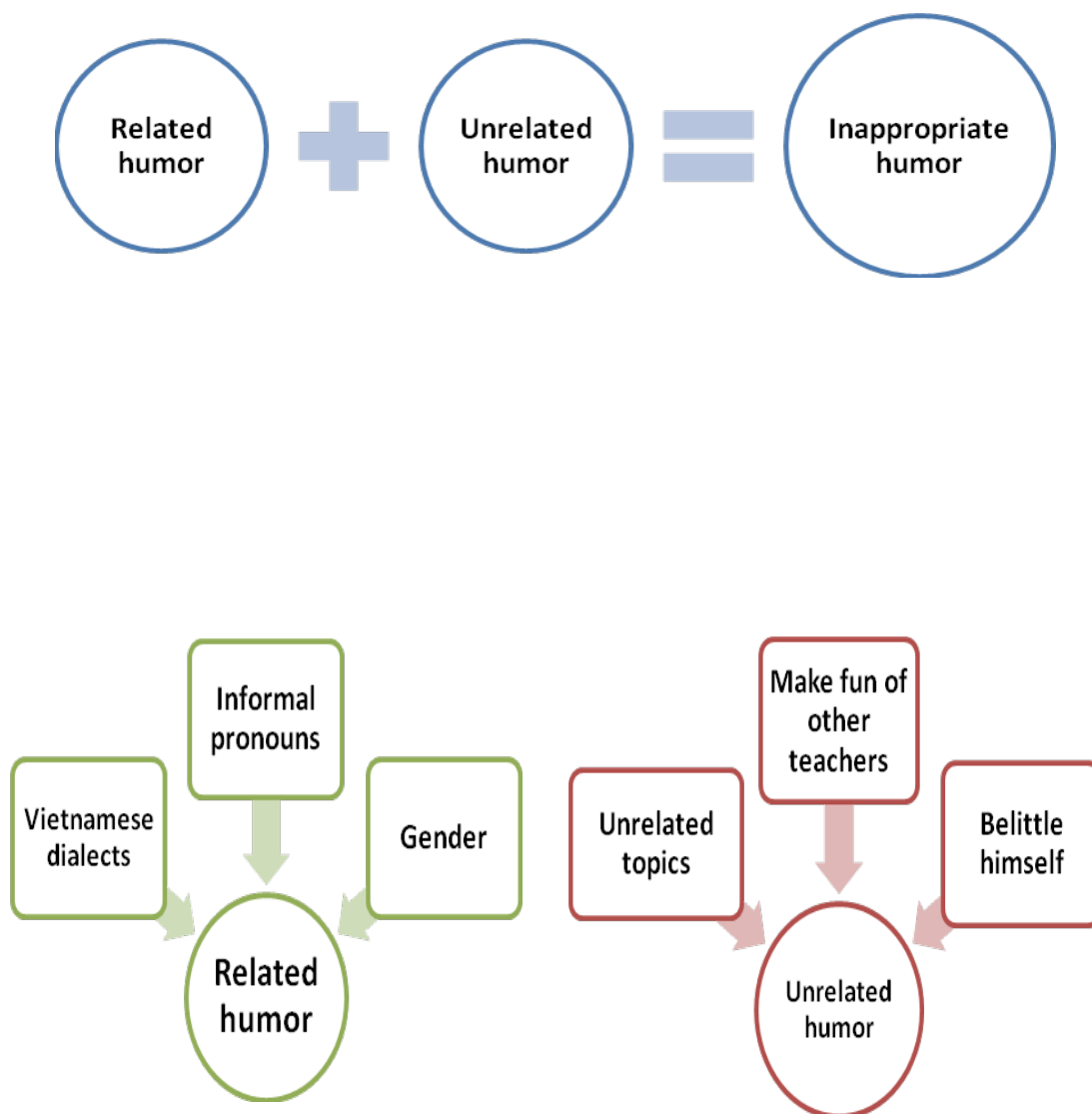


Figure 4: Reasons why students thought some humor uses were inappropriate

In fact, “gender” and “belittle himself” were mentioned only by two students (Emma and Lyn respectively).

III.4.1. Related humor

Related humor means humorous things are all in the examples used for the lessons although Mr. Bean also used them as his habit in everyday life (Vietnamese dialects, informal words).

III.4.1.1. Vietnamese dialects

Four students mentioned Vietnamese dialects as examples of inappropriate humor. In fact, when explanation was required, all of the students put themselves in other students' shoes. They said that speaking using Vietnamese dialects (*hỏi, bấu, hiểu*) was fine in E1 because they did not have that problem, but in some other classes where many students came from the middle part of Vietnam, they might feel offensive or embarrassed. Beth even remembered that another female teacher used that way in the hall, and Beth saw some uncomfortable faces possibly because they came from places speaking like that. Or Lyn is a person who highly appreciates "saving face". She imagined being in the situation of having-dialect people and would feel very embarrassed.

On the contrary, Becky thought that the problems related to "l", "n" in Vietnamese or regional dialects were "*widely joked about*" and the feelings depended on the people who had that problem. She told the researcher about Ms. Huyền Trang, the winner in Vietnam's Next Top Model. She could not distinguish between "l" and "n" when speaking, but she was totally fine even that problem happened when she was in a television program. However, Becky concluded that "*to sensitive people, they may feel uncomfortable*".

It is seen that no one in the class felt directly negative about the humor. Humor is used differently in different classes, so it is impossible to assume that Mr. Bean applied exactly this way and the frequency of using it in other classes and predict about its negative effects. Mr. Bean said that when he used Vietnamese dialects, he did not mean to target at any student because he did not know who had this problem, and if he had known, he would have adjusted a little when using it.

III.4.1.2. Informal pronouns

As mentioned earlier, one of the ways Mr. Bean used to generate humor in class is using personal pronouns like *nó*, *mày*, *tao*, *con/thằng đấ*y in examples. Some students thought that it was inappropriate. Emma said: *“I think class should have a limit that should not cross”*. Becky also agreed with Becky, especially in all-girl class like E1.

III.4.1.3. Gender

As noted earlier, “gender” was only mentioned by Emma. She remembered that Mr. Bean talked about *“long-legged women, fabulously rich men. The difference between male and female is that females do not need to learn much but getting married. He [Mr. Bean] says he doesn’t have any rich man, so he has to take care of himself. I find it offensive”*.

Emma as well as all students in E1 has very high independent thinking. They strongly believe that with their competences, they can be self-reliant, not dependent on any “fabulously rich men”. It is necessary to emphasize again that Emma is a representative of “anti-Mr. Bean” group. Although she said that humor was beneficial to her, she could not remember any example and she admitted that *“I tend to remember negative humor much more than beneficial one”*. Emma is also very sensitive; once she heard words related to *“hot or sensitive issues”*, she

“immediately does not listen to the teacher anymore and turned to draw or do something else”. For those reasons, Emma felt offensive when Mr. Bean distinguished males and females like that.

III.4.2. Unrelated humor

III.4.2.1. Unrelated topics

It is obvious that under “unrelated humor”, any topic is unrelated. However, only because of its unrelatedness, two students did not like them. They thought unrelated topics distracted the students and it was time-consuming.

In case of Emma, she emphasized strongly that Mr. Bean’s humor uses were mostly unrelated, which made her dislike them. Nonetheless, through the interview and questionnaire, the researcher could see that she did not like topics related to gender, scandals, and hot issues in society and only-teacher favorite topics. For example, she remembered he talked about *“Vàng Anh case, or long-legged models with fabulously rich men, nothing related to the lesson”*. She agreed that maybe, to him, there was a link between the point in the lesson and his joke, but to her the link was *“not explicit, which is purposeless”*. She preferred humor related to the lessons and thought unrelated or sensitive topics should be avoided.

However, the rest of the class were not too negative about unrelated humor and still enjoyed them very much. Lyn even supported *“social chat because it is one way to motivate students and it is good because the theory is very dry while our class has to learn it in three periods continuously”*. She shared that the lessons were very effective and everyone understood them well.

III.4.2.2. Make fun of other teachers (This phrase is quoted from written questionnaire of four students)

It should be made very clear of what “make fun of other teachers” is. By observations, the research saw that Mr. Bean sometimes told students about the typical traits of several teachers who taught or were known by E1 students and imitated those features. For example, Mr. Bean did an imitation of one male teacher’s gait, who was in charge of teaching E1 one semester a year ago. Because the imitation was really good, it made the students recall him and then laugh. Another example is Mr. Bean imitated the way to compliment students and the posture of another teacher (Mr. SF). Mr. SF has the habit of leaning his head back on the chair and praises good students after their short presentation: “*I’m satisfied*”. Although four students thought it was inappropriate, all said that Mr. Bean did not go too far and he did not mean something bad.

Why did they think it was inappropriate? Three students thought jokes like that may “*unintentionally hurt somebody’s feelings*” or those teachers “*may get angry and feel disrespected if they know about it*”. Beth said that the jokes might make her have the dislike feeling towards some teachers, who she knew little about and their lessons. About whom she knew well already, her impression towards them, however, was not influenced. To Lyn, this matter was subjective. If the joke was about teachers that she admired, she would feel uncomfortable, but if it was about others, it was fine.

About this, Emma thought differently and she even found it was good when Mr. Bean talked about other teachers because “*in class, we know little about our teachers. When he told us, we know more. What he said is all true and he had moderate language*”.

The researcher also asked four teachers about this matter, and three teachers said that imitating other’s gaits without bad intentions was fine. One teacher shared that she also organized a game for students to imitate

other teachers' gaits and guess who they were. The students in this class said that they had really fun moments, and they felt the tender and respected manner from their teacher towards the imitated teachers, absolutely not mocking one.

In fact, "making fun of others" or not is a matter of opinion. The researcher remembers one story by Nguyễn Nhật Ánh. When the students in that story role play exactly as what their teachers did in the classroom, some teachers at first are shocked and think that the students are making fun of them. Then, they understand that they are special in the eyes of the students because of some typical traits, sayings or actions. Therefore, whether it is "make fun" or not depends on each person.

III.4.2.3. Belittle himself

There is only one student who mentioned about this. It was Lyn. Lyn considers teachers as her models to learn from; therefore, anything that teachers do which is opposite to social norms or expectation will make her shocked or disappointed. According to Lyn, telling jokes about his bad habits or wrong-doings that went against what was usually expected of teachers' behaviors would hurt the teacher's image in students' eyes. That was when Mr. Bean shared with the students about the time he studied abroad. He hid books in the library to prevent others from checking them out so that he could get access to the books whenever he wanted; he and his Vietnamese friends took turns to borrow all the course books in the library and other students could not borrow those books. Belittling himself like that "*damaged his image in my eyes while I always think teachers should be respectful so that they can be models for me to look up to and therefore can inspire me to learn and to become a better person*".

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Bean is very free and sincere to tell students about his personal stories, and HSQ also pointed out that he told funny stories about himself to make people laugh. Unfortunately, Lyn idolizes teachers, so what the teacher does may have effects on her.

Conclusion

In conclusion, 13 out of 24 students thought that sometimes, Mr. Bean had inappropriate humor uses. To be more exact, they all thought that they were not very appropriate only and some of the students became gradually familiar with and felt comfortable with Mr. Bean’s style. The not-appropriate humor uses are categorized in the following table.

Related humor	Vietnamese dialects
	Informal pronouns
	Gender
Unrelated humor	Unrelated topics
	Make fun of other teachers
	Belittle himself

Table 6: Not-appropriate humor uses by Mr. Bean

The students said that some humor might be informal or they put themselves in other people’s cases and were likely to be negatively affected by the jokes.

Findings in a related study

In the study “Appropriate and inappropriate uses of humor by teachers” conducted by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006), the researchers analyzed inappropriate humor from 513 examples that 284 students offered. The researchers again placed the examples in four

categories: **disparaging humor targeting students, disparaging humor targeting others, offensive humor, and self-disparaging humor.**

More than 40% of the examples fell into the first category where instructors disparaged students individually or collectively. Students were disparaged for their lack of intelligence, gender, or appearance, as well as for their opinions.

When the disparaging humor targeted others, it used stereotypes and such specific group characteristics as gender, race/ethnicity, or university affiliation. Some inappropriate humor examples were listed as offensive because they contained sexual material or vulgar verbal or nonverbal expressions, or they were too personal.

Comparison between Mr. Bean's and Western teachers' humor

As can be seen very clearly, Western teachers' humor that students considered inappropriate was severely offensive and did not suit the class. They ridiculed students and targeted at their race, gender, or appearance, which are proved to hurt students deeply and cause a lot of negative consequences both spiritually and academically. Disparaging students for their opinions and lack of intelligence is likely to make the students unwillingly participate in class, even dare not to raise their voices again. More seriously, Western teacher's inappropriate humor also contained "sexual material or vulgar verbal or nonverbal expressions", which is hardly caught in any educational institution in Vietnam. Sex-related topics are avoided in the classroom by Vietnamese teachers in general.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bean's humor is only *not very appropriate*. He meant good when he tried to explain difficult points in the lesson to the students and closed the gap between students and teachers by his jokes or fun stories. He never targeted at a particular student or groups of people.

Even when he talked about other teachers, he talked tenderly in order to share their typical traits with the students. The biggest difference between Mr. Bean's and Western teachers' inappropriate humor is the intention. Mr. Bean had good intention to create those humor uses although to some students, they were not very suitable for them. On the other hand, Western teachers attacked directly their students and had offensive behaviours in the classroom.

Therefore, it can be concluded that sometimes, Mr. Bean humor was not suitable for some students and it was not very appropriate only, to be exact.

IV. Research question 5: *What suggestions does Mr. Bean have if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class?*

As found earlier, Mr. Bean thinks he is “**naturally humorous person**” and he does not need to work hard to make people laugh. When answering the question in the interview: “*What suggestions do you have if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class?*”, Mr. Bean believed being humorous or not was one's nature, and we could not try to learn it. “*For example, he rarely tells jokes, or he is always shy; then even we tell him, he knows but he is not familiar with it and he will not use it. So giving suggestions is very difficult*”. Therefore, he did not provide any suggestions

The researcher hopes that through the previous discussion of Mr. Bean's humor, including his perceptions of humor, his ways to generate humor in the classroom, readers will find some interesting and suitable humorous ingredients to add into their classrooms or everyday life.

V. Research question 6: *What kind of humor that the students think teachers in general should avoid using in the classroom?*

Besides a number of humor uses that students thought inappropriate discussed earlier, they mentioned some other types in the questionnaire that teachers should avoid using in the classroom.

The following figure shows the aspects that the students mentioned. The results ranked in descending order are as follows:

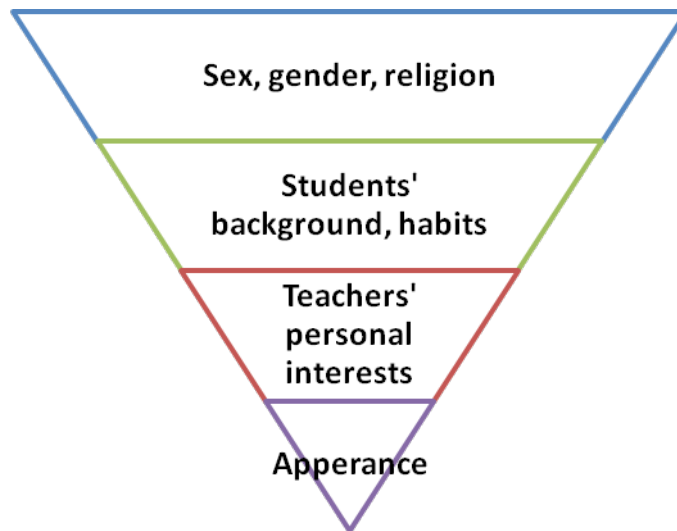


Figure 5: Should-avoid humor listed by the students

As can be seen in the chart, the very first thing teachers in general should avoid using in the classroom is sex, gender, and/or religion – related humor. Obviously, they are all sensitive topics and should not be talked publicly in front of the students, especially in an all-girl class like E1. Researchers and studies also describe those topics as the very first “offensive humor” that should not be used in the classroom.

Secondly, students’ background and habits should not be the topics to be joked about. Personal characteristics should be respected and anything belonging to students had better not be mortified.

Third, some students said that it would be very awkward if a teacher told jokes but only he/she laughed while the class remained silent.

One of the reasons for that situation is that only the teacher understands what he/she is talking about, his/her personal interests or stories. Besides, Emma said that although it was good when teachers tried to be closer to students, some of their personal stories were not needed or wanted by their students.

The last thing mentioned is humor about appearance, especially by male teachers. Normally, appearance should not be the topic discussed publicly in class.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

V.1. Summary

The study applied single-case study with one teacher and his students. The primary aim of the research is to explore the ways that the teacher, Mr. Bean, used to create humor in the classroom, and the students' perceptions of its effectiveness and appropriateness. Besides, some suggestions are hoped to be drawn by Mr. Bean and the students as useful sources for any teacher who wants to add humorous ingredients in his/her class.

Before answering the six research questions the study found out the importance of humor perceived by Mr. Bean. According to him, humor is beneficial for both students and teachers. Students will be more relaxed in a comfortable atmosphere. Laughter, besides, helps them to understand difficult points better. Regarding teachers, they will be closer to students and also more relaxed.

The findings for six research questions are presented in the following parts.

Research question 1: What are the ways the teacher used to generate humor in the classroom?

The research compared Mr. Bean and his students' perceptions of ways and types that he used to generate humor. He thought humor should be added in the lessons as illustrations and one of his common ways to bring laughs to his students is word mispronunciation. His humor was spontaneous while the students claimed it was planned, impromptu, or both. Mr. Bean and his students shared the same idea that his humor uses were both content-related and unrelated.

Besides, by using Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ, by Rod Martin), the researcher can say that Mr. Bean's style is Affiliative, which is "enjoying laughing with others and make people laugh". Mr. Bean got the maximum number of points for this style, ranking first among the four styles. Through this questionnaire, some important points were noted about his perceived humor such as "naturally humorous person", "can think of witty things to amuse others".

Next were six ways to generate humor in the classroom of Mr. Bean as categorized by the researcher through observations and cross-checking with the students' ideas. They are: (1) Speak dialects of some Vietnamese regions; (2) Mispronounce/distort pronunciation of English words on purpose; (3) Use informal/social language in everyday life; (4) Creating vivid examples; (5) Satirize issues, faults in society or in the classroom; (6) Belittle himself. Those are the ways that successfully created laughs in E1 class. Specific situations and examples were provided in the previous chapter. Because almost all of Mr. Bean's humor uses were in Vietnamese, the examples were kept as the original sayings.

Research question 2: What are the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the humor used by the teacher in the classroom?

The students' perceptions of the effectiveness of humor used by Mr. Bean were examined. Remarkably, humor helps 23 (98%) students feel more relaxed and creates more pleasant and comfortable atmosphere. 20 students are at ease to participate in class, think the lessons more interesting, and especially look forward to attending class when Mr. Bean uses humor. However, humor could not hold attention of some students and even distracted them occasionally. 10 students did not increase their interest in the subject itself.

Research question 3: Is there any humor used by the teacher that the students view as inappropriate?

Research question 4: If yes (question 3), what humor used by the teacher do the students view as inappropriate?

13 out of 24 students thought that sometimes, Mr. Bean used inappropriate humor. To be more exact, they all thought that they were only not very appropriate and some of the students became gradually familiar with and felt comfortable with Mr. Bean's style. The not-appropriate humor uses are categorized into two groups: (1) related humour (including Vietnamese dialects, informal pronouns and gender); and (2) unrelated humor (consisting of unrelated topics, making fun of other teachers but with good intentions, and belittling himself). As emphasized in the discussion chapter, one humor use whether proper or not depends on individuals and they have their own reason to decide. The researcher just described each student who commented on any inappropriate humor.

Research question 5: What suggestions does the teacher have if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class?

Although Mr. Bean believes there is no recipe for those who want to add humorous ingredients in their class, readers still may draw some useful ways for themselves.

Research question 6: What kind of humor that the students think teachers in general should avoid using in the classroom?

According to the students, teachers in general should avoid sensitive topics which are related to sex, gender, and/or religion. Secondly, students' background and habits should not be the topics to be joked about. Beside, some students said that it would be very awkward if

a teacher told jokes but only he/she laughed while the class remained silent. Lastly, teachers in general should not make jokes about appearance.

V.2. Implications for classroom teaching and teachers' self-improvement

V.2.1. Implications for classroom teaching

Since teachers' humor use in the classroom brings tangible benefits for classroom teaching, the use of humor in the classroom should be advocated and encouraged. First, teachers should be aware of the positive effects of humor in the classroom, which encourages teachers to develop instructional plans with more humor-oriented teaching materials, and to prepare intended humor ahead of teaching, although most of the humor in teaching may be spontaneous (Bryant, et al., 1980). Teachers could take advantage of humor to motivate students, arouse students' interest in topics, and enhance teacher-student relationship. Those teachers who do not have a good sense of humor may try their best to develop a good sense of humor and make use of it in the classroom, although the development of one's sense of humor may take time. Finally, there are several humor uses that teachers should avoid using in the classroom because they may cause negative effects on the students mentally as well as academically.

V.2.2. Implications for teachers' self-improvement

Since teachers' sense of humor and use of humor in teaching are likely to be beneficial for effective teaching, teachers are encouraged to improve their sense of humor and use more humor in teaching. Although Mr. Bean did not give any suggestion for teachers, we can figure out some effective ways in both Mr. Bean's class and Western classes. Firstly,

teachers should explore humor related to the course content. Students always consider it appropriate. Moreover, research shows that it helps them relate and recall important course information. Secondly, teachers should care more about the students, their outstanding characteristics or special behaviors. Caring teases from teachers would make students feel more approachable to their teachers. Finally, teachers may remember fun stories, jokes, or examples to tell students when possible and suitable. A large source of humorous examples provided by Mr. Bean come from books and television programs which he usually reads, watches and remembers.

V.3. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

The researcher is fully aware of the limitation of the current study. However, it can be overcome by further studies.

Further research may investigate the way to generate humor of a female teacher. Then there will be a comparison between two genders on how they create laughs in the classroom. Foreign teachers using humor in Vietnamese classrooms is another appealing and potential topic to investigate. Besides, in this study, Mr. Bean used mainly Vietnamese to make humor, but what will happen if the teacher only uses English? Is there any difficulty for students to understand the joke? In this case, could laughter be added in the classroom easily and successfully? In addition, in this study, the students are advanced English learners. The researcher also wants to find out the perceptions of as well as reactions of intermediate students (first-year students) to their teacher(s)' humor. It will certainly have differences, which is interesting to look at.

Humor in the classroom is a new and large field in Vietnam, which has not been studied deeply. This research may serve as a solid base,

therefore, a good start for further studies, which are firmly believed to be helpful in the pedagogy field.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: HSQ (gave to Mr. Bean, by Rod Martin)

Humor Styles Questionnaire

People experience and express humor in many different ways. Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humor might be experienced. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can. Use the following scale:

	Totally Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Totally Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh -- I seem to be a naturally humorous person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. I laugh and joke a lot with my friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. I do not like it when people use humor as a way of criticizing or putting someone down. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. I don't often say funny things to put myself down. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. I enjoy making people laugh. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24. When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I don't often joke around with my friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. I don't need to be with other people to feel amused -- I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Scoring

Affiliative Humor: 1*, 5, 9*, 13, 17*, 21, 25*, 29*

Self-Enhancing Humor: 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22*, 26, 30

Aggressive Humor: 3, 7*, 11, 15*, 19, 23*, 27, 31*

Self-Defeating Humor: 4, 8, 12, 16*, 20, 24, 28, 32

* Note: Items marked with * are reverse keyed; i.e., 1=7, 2=6, 3=5, 4=4, 5=3, 6=2, 7=1.

After reversing these items, sum across all 8 items in each scale to obtain scale totals.

Interpretation

Affiliative Humor: tendency to share humor with others, tell jokes and funny stories, amuse others, make others laugh, enjoy laughing along with others

Self-Enhancing Humor: tendency to maintain a humorous outlook on life even when not with others, use humor in coping with stress, cheer oneself up with humor

Aggressive Humor: tendency to use humor to disparage, put down, or manipulate others; use of ridicule, offensive humor; compulsive expression of humor even when inappropriate

Self-Defeating Humor: tendency to amuse others at one's own expense, self-disparaging humor; laughing along with others when being ridiculed or put down; using humor to hide one's true feelings from self and others

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APPENDIX II: Self-designed questionnaire (distributed to the students)

TEACHER’S HUMOR USE IN CLASSROOM

I am Pham Thi Thuy Linh from E1-K41, ULIS, VNU. I would like to ask for your help by answering the following questions for my research name “**Teacher’s humor use in classroom and students’ perception of its effectiveness and appropriateness**”. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of my study. Thank you very much for your help.

Part I: Students' perception of the effectiveness of humor use in classroom

1, Please refer to Mr. Bean when you answer questions in this part

Please answer the following questions by circling the appropriate number:

1: Strongly Disagree

2: Disagree

3: Neutral

4: Agree

5: Strongly Agree

Humor makes me feel more relaxed in my language classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor creates more comfortable and pleasant learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor makes me feel at ease to participate in class.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor helps to increase my interest in learning the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
My teacher's use of humor makes him more approachable in class.	1	2	3	4	5

I look forward to attending a class in which the teacher uses humor.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor helps the lesson more interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor helps to hold my attention in classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor helps me to remember the lesson better.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor generally improves my ability to learn a subject in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment overall.	1	2	3	4	5

2, Your opinion in general

Humor is important to language learning in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher should use humor frequently in classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
Humor should NOT be used to embarrass or ridicule students	1	2	3	4	5
Sarcasm is Inappropriate and should NOT be used	1	2	3	4	5

What kind of humor that you think teacher should avoid using in classroom? Why?

.....

Part II: Appropriate and Inappropriate humor in classroom

(Please answer as detailed as possible)

1. Can you list the examples of humor that Mr. Bean uses in the classroom?

.....

2. Is any use of humor that you think inappropriate?

A. Yes

B. No

If yes, what is the inappropriate humor?

Why do you think it is inappropriate?

.....
.....

What are the negative effects of the inappropriate humor that you listed in the classroom?

.....
.....

3. Can you describe Mr. Bean in one sentence?

.....

APPENDIX III: Interview transcript

All the interviews were in Vietnamese; therefore, the transcripts are kept the same as in reality. Below are transcripts from the interviews Mr. Bean and 3 among 6 students: **Becky, Lyn, and Emma.**

1. Mr. Bean

1. How do you think humor (in general) is beneficial to students?

Có một số lợi ích nhất định đối với SV. Thứ nhất là nó làm cho cái bầu không khí trong lớp học nó nhẹ nhàng. Thứ hai là đối với những bài học nó hơi khó hiểu một chút mà mình có một chút humor như thế thì làm cho SV nó cũng đỡ mệt mỏi hơn và nó dễ hiểu hơn. Nhưng mà humor mà mình dùng là humor cài vào bài chứ không phải chuyện phiếm không. Tức là cũng là humor, nhưng mà mình nên humor vào ví dụ, vào cách giải thích, vân vân.

2. How do you think humor (in general) is beneficial to teachers?

Khi mình dùng humor, mình kể một câu chuyện cười, mình tự nhiên làm cho mình gần với sinh viên hơn, để SV không nhìn mình với con mắt xa lạ hoặc sợ hãi quá. Humor làm cho tâm hồn người ta nhẹ nhàng, thoải mái, nó đỡ căng thẳng. Mà mình nghĩ khi tâm hồn thoải mái rồi, thì sẽ làm việc tốt hơn. Dạy học hay làm bất cứ việc gì nó cũng tốt hơn.

3. *You use a lot of humor in classroom, so you think how are they beneficial to YOUR students?*

Có chứ (thấy các benefits ở học sinh của thầy). Mình nghĩ cái humor nó là bản chất rồi, vào bất cứ một lớp nào, kể cả lớp học thêm ở nhà, hay trên trường thì mình đều thể cả.

4. *Do you think that there are appropriate and inappropriate humors?*

Mình nghĩ là điều đó phụ thuộc vào một số yếu tố, như là tôn giáo, hay là sex hay là gender, hay là một số cái bên mình gọi là địa phương. Ví dụ em humor thuộc về tôn giáo như đạo phật hay đạo thiên chúa, mà mang tính chất kỳ thị quá thì cũng không có tác dụng

You say yes, from your own experience, tell examples of appropriate and inappropriate humors?

(☺) Những gì mình làm trên lớp thì hầu hết là appropriate, những cách nói vui, câu chuyện hay ví dụ nó hơi sinh động một chút để mọi người dễ hiểu thôi. Inappropriate chắc là phụ thuộc vào mỗi cá nhân

5. *Do you think the use of humor in the classroom will always result in positive effects?*

Có cả negative chứ. Về negative, thì mình lại nghĩ cái này phụ thuộc một phần vào học sinh. Khi tiết học nó thoải mái, không có áp lực học hành thi cử, thì nó cũng không sao nhé. Còn nếu kỳ thi đang sắp đến, giờ học không đảm bảo được cái thông tin, mà lúc đấy mình lại humor, mà nhất là nó lại không liên quan thì lúc đấy Sv có thể nghĩ mình đang lãng phí thời gian

6. *Your humor is **planned** or **spontaneous**?*

Tất cả là impromptu, spontaneous cả. Mình cũng có một thời gian hay đọc các truyện cười, xem phim hay TV có gì buồn cười thì mình cũng hay nhớ, thì khi vào lớp học mình thấy nó phù hợp một cái thì mình cho ra thôi, chứ thực ra cái đó, không lên kế hoạch trước gì hết. Mình không thể biết mình dạy có những activity gì mà dùng cái này hay cái kia. Hay vào lớp này thì phù hợp mình nói cái này, còn vào lớp khác thì mình lại phải nói cái khác.

7. *As you notice, you use **content-related** or **content-unrelated** humor?*

Uh, của mình thì cũng có 2 loại: content-related thì là mình hay lấy những cái ví dụ cho Sv, còn những cái để cho nó vui vẻ...thì mình hay trêu mọi người một số cái ví dụ như next top's model...thì những cái đấy nó xen kẽ, hay những bạn nào vào muộn thì mình cũng trêu để mọi người không cảm thấy nó quá nghiêm trọng chẳng hạn

8. Do you have any preference for using any particular type of humor?

Mình cứ thấy cái nào phù hợp thì mình cho vào thôi, mình có thể lấy humor về mặt nội dung, hay cái cách nói mà mình hay giả giọng, cái đấy nó toàn là thường trực thôi

9. Do you avoid any type of humor? Why?

Cái sexual harassment, mà biểu lộ hành động hơi thái quá thì mình không dùng. Hay những câu chuyện có ví dụ, mà phải chỉ bộ phận này hay bộ phận kia thì mình không dùng.

10. What suggestions do you have if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients to his/her class?

Thực đấy cái đấy thuộc về bản chất. Ví dụ bản tính tôi là một người không bao giờ kể chuyện cười, rụt rè nhút nhát, thì kể cả mình bảo họ, họ biết, những họ không quen, thì họ cũng không bao giờ dùng. Nên chuyện suggest thì cũng khó.

Hay cùng một câu chuyện cười, có người vừa cất giọng lên hay cái điệu bộ của họ đã buồn cười rồi

11. Some students say that when you make joke about "I" "n" related-problems, it seems the joke refers to them. What do you think about that?

I/n: mình không biết ai bị đâu, mà nghĩ là ám chỉ

If in one class, there are many students having this problem, do you continue using this way to make humor in classroom?

Là mình chưa thấy lớp này có ai mắc vấn đề đấy cả, còn nếu mà sang lớp khác, tiếp xúc mà thấy đa số có vấn đề thì có lẽ mình cũng phải điều chỉnh một chút.

2. Becky

1. Do you like Mr. Bean's humor in general?

Có chứ, thường là những humor của thầy chấp nhận được, rất funny và tạo được cái mood cho lớp, học hứng thú hơn, rõ ràng thấy là reaction của mọi người rất là positive. Thỉnh thoảng thầy dùng từ hơi dân dã, như con này con kia thì có 1 số bạn uncomfortable với nó thôi. Nhưng mình cũng học thầy 1 kỳ rồi, bây giờ lại học thêm 1 kỳ nữa, mọi người cũng quen rồi, nên không thấy offence quá nhiều.

2. *Do you think that humor is beneficial to you? How?*

Humor của thầy khiến mình rất relax, hơn nữa thầy lại rất biết cách kết hợp humor vào cách giải thích, một cái concept nào đấy, làm cho cái đó rất dễ nhớ và học thuộc. Ví dụ như implicature, Các ví dụ của thầy được “đời thường hóa”, rất humorous, dễ hiểu, và gắn sát với bài học.

Trong giờ thầy dùng humor nên cũng thấy gắn bó hơn, ngoài ra, vào giờ break, thầy dành thời gian để nói chuyện với học sinh, make joke, nên rõ ràng là gắn bó hơn. Bọn lớp mình cũng hay “châu” vào, nói chuyện với thầy

3. *Any humor that you like/remember most? Why?*

Nhìn tổng thể rất là humorous, và focus vào việc học thôi.

4. *Give 1 comment on Mr. Bean's humor: useful và relax.*

5. *You think those humor are planned/spontaneous?*

Tớ nghĩ là spontaneous, nó thuộc về tính cách ý. Cố gắng thì sẽ rất gương.

6. *Are they related/unrelated to the content? Is that good? Is that better/necessary when humor are related to the content?*

Humor mà chỉ vui thì nên thật là ít thôi, nhưng tớ khuyến khích là đưa humor đấy vào việc giảng dạy vì nó sẽ có ích rất lớn đến việc HS nhớ được bài học đấy lâu hơn. Còn những cái unrelated thì nên hạn chế vì HS cũng không phải cấp 1, 2, 3 mà phải mua vui cho nó nên vẫn cần focus vào bài học hơn.

II. Clarify some points in the questionnaire

1. *Humor helps to increase my interest in learning the subject. You chose 2 (Disagree).*

Chỉ là interest về con người của GV, ok học ông này cũng được, còn bản thân cái môn học thì không, tớ vẫn thấy cái môn Semantics nó useless.

Khi nói về các thầy cô, thấy không nên, nhưng sao các bạn lại cười trong lớp? Thực ra thì con người đôi khi họ rất là contrast nhé, nếu họ thấy không fine, họ sẽ không cười. Tớ biết là khi nói về một ai đó, mà mình không thấy ổn với nó thì mình sẽ không cười. Emma và tớ thỉnh thoảng cũng thế. Nếu nói về ai đó, mình thấy funny, buồn cười thì cái đó hoàn toàn appropriate. Với thầy [T...], [C...] thì lớp mình cũng có 1 số ấn tượng không hay lắm, thì khi nói về họ mình sẽ cười, đâu có sao đâu?

Còn khi thầy pha trò, chỉ có 1 số ít đối tượng cười, còn lại không thì đó mới là vấn đề.

2. Sarcasm is Inappropriate and should NOT be used. You chose 1 (Strongly Disagree)

Sarcasm thì nó cũng là 1 loại joke mà thôi, và khi nó được sử dụng thích hợp thì nó sẽ khá là funny. Bản chất của tớ cũng là 1 đứa sarcasm, châm biếm và đả kích 1 chút. Ví dụ thỉnh thoảng thầy describe 1 số giáo viên, nhại giọng, giả dáng thầy cô kia, nó hoàn toàn có thể, appropriate, miễn là nó không quá touchy với 1 số phần tử trong lớp, hay sarcasm vào đối tượng trong lớp.

Ví dụ là tớ chẳng hạn, khi tớ đến muộn thầy bảo “bị sưng răng hả em?” vào đúng đối tượng và đối tượng đó cảm thấy comfortable thì ok, không sao. Và nó vẫn mang lại cái laugh cho cả lớp.

OK cho 2 đối tượng: 1 là đối tượng cảm thấy ok, 2 là đối tượng không có mặt ở đó.

Sarcasm nên dùng, nhưng nên ở trong tay của những người biết cách dùng, tức là biết cách chọn đối tượng ý.

3. Humor generally improves my ability to learn a language in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment overall. You chose 3.

Khả năng tiếp thu bài giảng thì là thuộc về mỗi người.

4. What do you think about making joke about “l”, “n”?

l, n ổn vì cái đó là nó được widely make joke about. Vả lại, nó cũng phụ thuộc vào người có vấn đề đó, chị ở trên VN next top model, còn đưa lên TV, nhưng người ta thấy fine thì chẳng sao cả. Còn những người sensitive quá, thì có thể họ cũng uncomfortable.

3. Lyn

1. *Do you like Mr. Bean's humor in general?*

Có. Ví dụ như thầy [T..] có thể thầy cũng cố dùng humor nhưng mà cái humor của thầy nó rất là sensitive, nhiều lúc thầy dùng những cái nó quá liên quan đến sex (...) thì nó quá động chạm đến tình cảm hay là sex nên là chị không thích.

Còn phần lớn thầy Bean không dùng những cái như thế, mà những cái thầy đùa luôn liên quan trực tiếp đến bài học.

Hoặc là như thầy [S...], thầy cũng cố gắng gây cười nhưng có thể bản tính của thầy serious quá, mặt thầy serious quá, hay là giọng nói vẫn serious, nên dù thầy có nói đùa, cả lớp cũng không thấy buồn cười quá, chỉ có mỗi thầy cự tực cười thôi.

2. *Do you think that humor is beneficial to you? How?*

Rất có lợi với chị, vì chị là người rất coi trọng vai trò của thầy trong việc học của học sinh. GV là người có vai trò rất lớn trong việc motivate học sinh, làm cho học sinh có thích học hay không và học có cảm thấy hiểu bài hay không. Khi HS đến lớp hiểu bài, yêu quý GV, thấy GV nhiệt tình thì tự dung thấy rất thích đi học. Mà thấy thầy tốt như thế, nhiệt huyết như thế, thì cũng cố gắng học để không phụ tấm lòng của thầy.

Việc thầy dùng humor làm cho chị cảm thấy thầy là người rất dễ gần, rất nhiệt tình. Môn Semantics và Pragmatics là môn khó hiểu, việc thầy giúp đỡ mình, cũng mình vượt qua làm mình thấy rằng thầy hiểu được những khó khăn của mình, cảm thấy mình không đơn độc, mình không phải là 1 đứa stupid. Rồi là rất thích đến lớp. Học dễ vào hơn, thích đi học

a. *How does the use of humor affect the class atmosphere?*

Lớp rất vui, mà không khí lớp học rất quan trọng. Ví dụ một lớp bạn nào cũng ủ rũ, không khí lớp trầm thì tự dung mình sẽ thấy chán, chắc cái môn này nó cũng chán. Lớp vui vẻ, bạn nào cũng tươi cười hơn hở, làm cho mình thấy phấn khích, có động lực học hành.

b. *How does the use of humor affect your ability to learn the content? your academic performance?*

Đọc sách không thì cũng có thể hiểu lơ mờ, nhưng không rõ lắm, hay bàn bạc với bạn trong lớp, nhưng quan trọng nhất là do thầy, thầy đưa ra những cái ví dụ làm cho mình rất rất dễ nhớ, lần sau mình chỉ cần nghe thấy từ đấy, nhớ đến cái ví dụ của thầy là lập

tư mình hiểu được. Những cái môn như thế này mà không có ví dụ hay, ví dụ đặc sắc thì cứ đọc sách mãi, đọc lý thuyết mãi thì cũng không thể nào hiểu được.

3. *What kind of humor the he usually uses in class? Any humor that you like/remember most? Why?*

Vezi easy. Thầy hay dùng giọng nói, như gặp nhau cuối tuần, họ hay modify giọng nói đi để gây cười, hay những technical terms, thầy đọc khác đi rất là buồn cười, làm cho mình thấy những technical terms đó không quá xa lạ, khô khan, mà gần gũi hơn, rồi những ví dụ đều là liên quan đến trong cuộc sống, cũng liên quan đến girl, boy, nhưng không liên quan đến sex. Tức là nó subtle thôi, chứ nó không quá khiếm nhã.

Thầy tạo được mối liên kết với HS, vì thầy hay trêu các bạn trong lớp, nhưng trêu rất thông minh, thầy nói bằng giọng rất âu yếm, gần gũi, tình cảm.

Các ví dụ tổng hợp hòa quyện với nhau, thầy rất biết cách lúc nào dùng cái nào nên cả giờ học của thầy lúc nào nó cũng rất là vui nhộn.

4. *Give 1 comment on Mr. Bean's humor*

Humor của thầy rất thông minh.

5. *You think those humor are planned/spontaneous?*

Cả 2, bản chất của thầy là người rất humorous, khi thầy nói chuyện với mọi người thấy mọi người rất thích, thì thầy đã plan là sẽ đưa nó vào trong bài học, nhưng một số cái trong giờ học cũng là do thầy tự nhiên nghĩ ra. Một số examples là thầy plan trước, hoặc thầy dùng từ thể hệ này sang thể hệ khác. Nhưng có lúc thầy mình bị lớp mình xoay chẳng hạn, thì thầy không thể nào mà plan được. HS các lớp khác nhau sẽ có những cái thắc mắc khác nhau, nên lúc đấy thầy phải tự nghĩ ra.

6. *Are they related/unrelated to the content? Is that good? Is that better/necessary when humor are related to the content?*

Social chat cũng là một cách motivate học sinh mà, thế cũng tốt vì những môn lý thuyết tiếng nó rất khô khan, mà lớp mình lại học nhiều tiết nên thỉnh thoảng thầy thêm cái này cái kia vào. Không ai thấy là thầy chỉ buồn mà không dạy gì, vì giờ học của thầy rất rất hiệu quả. Chị thấy bạn nào cũng hiểu bài rất tốt.

Part II

1. In questionnaire, you mention: “Make fun other teaches behind their back. Can you be more specific?”

Cái này nó cũng rất subjective. Ví dụ chị không thích thầy [T...], thì khi thầy make fun chị thấy rất sướng ☺ nhưng ví dụ cô [HT], chị không biết cô là ai, một số thứ chị không thích như cô demotivate HS trong việc làm NC, cô quá critical với HS (biết qua blog, FB, các bạn kể lại), nhưng có cái chị cũng thích ở cô đấy là cô rất nghiêm túc, nên khi thầy nói, chị không cảm thấy comfortable lắm.

Chỉ là not very inappropriate, chỉ là không thích bằng những cái khác.

Chị còn rất coi trọng saving face, chỉ cần tưởng tượng mình trong hoàn cảnh của họ thì mình sẽ xấu hổ lắm nhĩ

Chị có bệnh idolize giáo viên, GV là model để mình hướng tới, học tập, khi làm những gì trái với social norm, expect → làm xấu hình ảnh của thầy (như việc giấu sách)

4. Emma

1. Do you like Mr. Bean’s humor in general?

Sometimes, sometimes not. Trong giờ học mà thầy sử dụng humor thì chắc chắn là thú vị hơn, nhẹ nhàng hơn, nhất là với những môn như semantics hay pragmatics. Nhưng thỉnh thoảng thì nó cũng hơi off-track, nó cũng hơi không liên quan đến bài học lắm, thầy có vẻ thích comment về những vấn đề hot issue của xã hội, những vấn đề nhạy cảm, nhất là trong một lớp toàn con gái với nhau nên cũng không được convenient lắm.

Trong questionnaire cậu bảo có vấn đề liên quan đến “Sex, gender”?

Sex ở đây là gender. Khi thầy đã động đến những vấn đề đấy thì mình không nghe.

Sao cậu biết liên quan đến sex hay gender?

Nghe loáng thoáng mấy câu đầu nhận ra thì mình không nghe nữa, tớ quay ra vẽ vờ hoặc làm việc riêng.

2. Do you think that humor is beneficial to you? How?

Nếu nó liên quan đến bài học thì mình sẽ có cái ấn tượng gì đấy, làm cho bài dễ nhớ hơn.

Ví dụ?

Tớ không nhớ được cái nào có lợi ích cả, vì mình có xu hướng nhớ những cái negative hơn.

a. How does the use of humor affect the class atmosphere?

Thì tớ thấy ngoài mình có phản ứng negative ra thì tất cả mọi người đều có vẻ enjoy, nhất là Liv.

b. How does the use of humor affect your relationship with the teacher during the class?

Tớ thì cũng không quá negative về mấy cái joke của thầy, nhưng tính cách của thầy hơi “đặc biệt”, the kind of person that you should not meet up with.

c. How does the use of humor affect your ability to learn the content?

Your academic performance khi thầy simplify thì dễ nhớ hơn, chứ còn joke thì không dễ hiểu hơn được, ví dụ như imply cà chua thì làm sao mà ám chỉ đến việc imply hay gì đó được.

3. Any humor that you dislike/remember most? Why?

Có 1 lần nào đó thầy nói về vụ vàng anh, hay vụ mấy cô người mẫu chân dài đại gia này nọ ý, chẳng liên ca gì đến bài học cả, tự nhiên thầy lại đề cập đến vấn đề đấy

4. Give 1 comment on Mr. Bean's humor

Có lẽ mai sau tớ cũng sẽ không đi theo con đường đấy, kể cả là dùng humor.

5. Về style của thầy:

Có vẻ cái này các GV nhiều kinh nghiệm thường giống nhau, hơi quá dân dã, tức là nó hơi informal ý. Các thầy cô thường express personal view mà không để ý xem học sinh nghĩ thế nào, cứ kể chuyện này chuyện kia mà không lo lắng đến cái impression.

6. You think those humor are planned/spontaneous?

Tớ nghĩ là spontaneous thôi, làm sao thầy ở nhà mà plan hết các cái joke đc.

7. Are they related/unrelated to the content? Is that good? Is that better/necessary when humor is related to the content?

Tốt nhất là nó cũng nên related 1 chút, thì cũng làm cho học sinh dễ nhớ hơn. Point này thì thầy có cái joke này chẳng hạn. Ví dụ, đang nói về linguistic mà nói về mấy cái scandal gần đây thì nó chẳng liên quan gì cả. Cũng có thể nó có cái link nào đó đối với thầy, thoáng qua chẳng hạn nhưng nó không explicit với mình thì cũng không có mục đích gì cả.

8. What do you think when Mr. Bean talks about other teachers?

Nói về các thầy cô khá ok, vì ở trên lớp mình chỉ biết ít về các thầy cô, thì thầy kể mình có thể biết nhiều hơn, thế cũng hay. Các cái thầy nói thì đều đúng và thầy cũng có chừng mực về những chuyện đó.

9. Do you have any suggestion if a teacher wants to add humorous ingredients in classroom?

Phải liên quan đến bài học, có 1 mối liên hệ nào đó, tránh những cái humor mà hơi nhạy cảm 1 chút, hay những topic thuộc về interest của riêng GV thôi, mình có thể không muốn nghe về vấn đề đấy, không có nhu cầu nghe, nhưng GV cứ thích chia sẻ, hay những tin tức mà thầy biết chẳng hạn, cũng có xu hướng là đem ra bàn ở trên lớp.

Part II

1. Sarcasm is Inappropriate and should NOT be used. You chose 3.

Sarcasm có thể với đối tượng khác, không phải là students, mà là 1 đối tượng thứ 3 nào đấy. Sarcasm nó cũng thể hiện 1 cái sharp point of view, thì thể hiện thầy có kiến thức, có trải nghiệm này nọ.

2. Any topic related to gender or sex?

Thầy có nhắc tới, thầy có nói tới chân dài, đại gia, male, female khác nhau là các bạn nữ thì không cần học quá nhiều và sau đấy là get married, thầy thì không thể kiếm đc đại gia nào nên thầy phải tự lo. Tớ có cảm giác offensive.

3. In the questionnaire, you wrote "...[T]he language, it may not be appropriate for the learning environment". Can you be more specific?

Ví dụ con nọ con kia (chỉ dùng trong ví dụ thôi), tớ nghĩ là lớp học thì vẫn nên có 1 giới hạn nào đó, không nên đi quá.